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# Development of Mennonite music in the Congo: A study in musical thought

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MENNONITE MUSIC IN THE CONGO:  
A STUDY IN MUSICAL THOUGHT

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Arts

Jill Michelle Schroeder-Dorn  
College of Performing and Visual Arts  
School of Music

December 2012

This Dissertation by: Jill Michelle Schroeder-Dorn

Entitled: *The Development of Mennonite Music in the Congo: A Study in Musical Thought*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Arts in College of Performing and Visual Arts in School of Music.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Schroeder-Dorn, Jill. *The Development of Mennonite Music in the Congo: A Study in Musical Thought*. Published Doctor of Arts dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, 2012.

The purpose of this study was to examine musical thought among members of the Congolese Mennonite Church. Established and governed by missionaries, the music practices of the Church were initially modeled after Western services, which consisted of church choirs and four-part hymn singing. Congolese who chose to convert to Christianity had to adapt to a new musical system, which included not only properties of musical sound, but also concepts surrounding the music making experience, including what music is and what it has the power to accomplish. The church has now been in existence for over one hundred years, and musical changes have occurred in both sound and concept. This is an examination of those changes, with focus on the development of current forms and practices, the function of each form in the worship service, surrounding influences, and the points of debate that occurred with each stylistic shift. Additionally, the nature of music making and the boundaries between the sacred and profane are discussed.

This was accomplished through traveling to DR Congo and employing the ethnographic techniques of interview and observation. Fifty men and women from thirteen different congregations were consulted over a four week period, and observations occurred at choir rehearsals and church worship services. All research was conducted

within the city of Kinshasa, which is both the capital of DR Congo and its largest city. Four categories of music were identified, as well as descriptions for their development and function in the worship service. A timeline was created from 1911 to the present, demonstrating the shift from one style of music to four styles of music. The timeline also encompasses surrounding influences and the topics for debate that accompanied each style change.

Music making and musical thought were determined by numerous factors, both musical and extra-musical. The overarching purpose of music making has not changed from the mission era, but the boundaries that were initially established by missionaries were later challenged by Pentecostal churches in Kinshasa, especially churches in the revivalist movement. In the midst of change, Congolese Mennonites continue to write their own songs and explore sonic possibilities, creating sounds that are distinct to each congregation and choir.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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I would like to thank my friends and family, especially my parents and my husband, Mark. To my mom and dad: I wouldn't have gotten very far without your encouragement and support. To Mark: your love and support have blessed me beyond what I can express. I am so thankful to have you in my life.

I would also like to give thanks to my heavenly Father. For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever.



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## PREFACE

My interest in the topic of Mennonite music in the Congo started long before the prompt to write a dissertation. Mennonite by background, my father was one of many young men who worked in the Belgian Congo to fulfill alternative service requirements during the Vietnam War. Through a civilian public service program called PAX, he lived in the Congo through the latter part of the 1960s. During that time, he acquired a few Congolese artifacts which he brought back with him to the United States. He returned with various crafts and works of art, but I was especially intrigued with a hymnbook titled *Bankangu Ya Kintwadi*. *Bankangu Ya Kintwadi* looked exactly like the hymnbooks used in the church of my childhood, but the hymns were translated into an African language.

In my youth, I was immersed in a Mennonite culture that was shaped by people of German ancestry. Being Mennonite was tied to certain cultural traditions, including four-part hymn singing, which made it odd to consider the idea of African Mennonites. My first encounter with Mennonites on the continent of Africa was through an assignment for an ethnomusicology course taken during my master's degree. I studied the music and traditions of an Ethiopian Mennonite Church in the Denver area. Instantly, I felt camaraderie with members of the church. We shared many common ties by virtue of being members of the same denomination; we had visited the same churches and communities and knew the same members of Mennonite leadership.

During the course of my interviews, they spoke emphatically about Ethiopians as a reserved and pious people. As they talked, it seemed fitting to me that they would be a part of the Mennonite community. However, their services were unlike any Mennonite church service I had ever attended. The music practice for this self-declared “reserved” people was performed in an exuberant manner, including loud cries and ululations accompanied by dancing and clapping. My feeling of being an insider quickly faded, as I did not understand the relationship between being reserved and pious and exuberantly participating in music. But what seemed contradictory to me did not seem unusual to them. This piqued my curiosity on the topic of the cultural practices of African Mennonites. Attempting to understand both the music and the mindset behind the music practices became a great interest to me. This research has been a partial fulfillment of my curiosity.

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### Background

In 1989, Bruno Nettl published a study examining musical thought among Blackfoot Indians, defining musical thought as: “the conceptions, ideas, and assumptions that underlie the songs themselves and that govern the kinds of behavior that lead to the production and consumption of musical sound”<sup>1</sup> The aim of his study was not to produce a complete ethnography, but to present an interpretation of Blackfoot musical conception.<sup>2</sup> He sought ideas surrounding the general character of music; ideas about music as it exists in time — including its origins, history, sources, and changeability; music in society — the society of both human and supernatural figures; and conceptions of music as a system of sound, or as an art. The purpose of the present study is to identify similar themes among another society, namely, members of the Mennonite Church in the area currently known as Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>3</sup>

The Mennonite Church is a Christian denomination that dates back to the Protestant Reformation and has now spread throughout the world. It originally formed in the sixteenth century as part of the Anabaptist movement, which was one of the four branches of Protestant churches wishing to break away from the Catholic Church. Mennonites rejected infant baptism, advocated for the separation of church and state, and

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<sup>1</sup> Bruno Nettl, *Blackfoot musical thought: Comparative perspectives* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1989), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., v.

<sup>3</sup> The name of this region has changed multiple times during the last century. For the purpose of this study, “Congo” or “the Congo” will be the default term to describe the geographic area. DR Congo will be used if a current situation is addressed.

refused military participation. Over time, they developed an ethno-religious identity through their German and Swiss roots. After facing persecution in Europe, they migrated to Russia in the eighteenth century, but never assimilated into Russian culture, keeping their practices and beliefs tightly intact. In the 1870s, Mennonites lost military exemption from the Russian government. They migrated to many parts of the world, but especially to North America where the German ethnic identity has largely remained intact. Although a broad range of practice exists, Mennonites are commonly identified through a commitment to personal piety, which often leads to the spurning of excess and non-conformity to the world. Four-part hymn singing remains a cultural identifier and exuberant, Pentecostal practices of worship are viewed with suspicion.

Another identifier of the Mennonite Church is its strong commitment to missionary work, most of which focused on the African continent. When missionaries introduced their faith to Africans in the early twentieth century, they also introduced their culture, which included four-part hymn singing. They encouraged Africans to leave their old music practices, assuming that all African traditions were closely associated with animism. Africans who chose to convert to Christianity comprehensively adapted Western cultural practices, including music.

Missionary efforts resulted in a drastic demographic change in the Mennonite denomination. At the turn of the twentieth century, Africa had only one established Mennonite church, which consisted of a few dozen members. Currently, Africa is home to the largest Mennonite population, many of whom live in DR Congo. At the turn of the twenty-first century, Mennonite World Conference, an assembly of Anabaptist Christians throughout the world, reported that Africa was home to 451,341 baptized members,

outnumbering membership in North America.<sup>4</sup> This came as a surprise to many Mennonites of European descent who had associated their identity as Mennonites with ethnicity. The label “Mennonite” was no longer synonymous with ethnic identities such as certain types of food and Germanic last names. This led to questions regarding cultural practice among Mennonites around the world, including the use and nature of music in the church.

The present study addresses music in the context of an African Mennonite Church, specifically the Congolese Mennonite Church. The purpose of this study is to examine musical thought among members of the Congolese Mennonite Church. Modeled after Nettl’s four categories, Congolese Mennonite musical thought in the present study will encompass: (1) current classification and function, addressing how different musical sounds are distinguished; (2) history, including a timeline and perceptions of change by Congolese Mennonites; (3) nature of sacred music and music making, a discussion on the relationship between music and the supernatural; (4) boundaries between sacred and profane, an identification of what is acceptable and what is forbidden in Congolese Mennonite musical thought.

I traveled to the populous and ethnically diverse city of Kinshasa, the capital of DR Congo, to examine these questions. Employing Nettl’s method, these categories were examined through interviews with multiple informants and observations of rehearsals and worship services. Four styles of Congolese Mennonite music were identified, and the development and function of each style was examined. A timeline was constructed, and member perceptions of changes were sought. The central theme of

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<sup>4</sup> John A. Lapp and C. Arnold Snyder, eds., *Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts*, Global Mennonite History Series: Africa (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2006) vii.

“singing for God’s glory” was determined as the reason to sing, or why music is important. Boundaries were discussed for sacred and secular dimensions in music, especially through the concept of inspired versus non-inspired songs.

This chapter is organized in the following order: conceptual underpinnings, purpose of the study, limitations and assumptions, and definition of key terms.

### **Conceptual Underpinnings**

Every society has the common characteristic of music, but the employed styles, practices, and concepts vary from culture to culture. Similarly, it seems that every religious system encompasses a body of music that is comprised of unique styles and practices, and each body of religious music adheres to underlying rules and ideologies.

In studying religious musics from around the world, the external realities deserve examination, but analysis is better understood in the context of musical thought. Alan P. Merriam, when studying the Flathead Indians of Montana, was one of the first researchers to demonstrate this type of analysis in religious music. For him, what primarily needs to be explained in sacred music is the association with music and the supernatural,<sup>5</sup> or a description of the connection that occurs between the supernatural and humans when music is performed. This charge to explain music by its relationship with deities can be applied to music in all religious systems, for each system has some concept of how musical practice affects both the worshipper and the deity being worshipped.

These associations can be determined by discovering the nature of music — what it is, how it is used, and what it has the power to accomplish. The answers to these questions vary among belief systems. For example, in many animistic belief systems,

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<sup>5</sup> Alan P. Merriam, *Ethnomusicology of the Flathead Indians* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967), 3-19.



music has the power to bring spirits down to earth. A supernatural appointment such as possession or healing is more likely to occur if certain factors are present, such as large numbers of people attending and participating in the ceremony, the singing of appropriate songs for each event, and the amount of intensity and skill possessed by the performing musicians. In contrast, for practitioners of Kabbalah, the branch of Jewish mysticism, music does not lead to spirit possession or healing, but it does induce feelings of joy and makes the soul more perceptive of the spiritual realm. Although the supernatural does not descend in the same manner as animistic spirits, God is delighted by singing. This is similar to the principle of sympathetic vibrations on strings; “higher Glories” are aroused when humans are animated in their worship.<sup>6</sup>

For Christians, purity of intention is often more important than playing or singing with skill. For example, a popular evangelical song relays this message:

When the music fades, all is stripped away and I simply come,  
longing just to bring something that’s of worth that will bless Your heart.  
I’ll bring You more than a song, for a song in itself is not what You have  
required, You search much deeper within, through the way things appear,  
You’re looking into my heart.<sup>7</sup>

With this belief, God is most pleased with someone whose mind and affection are focused on Him, rather than someone who, even if he or she possesses great skill, lacks spiritual conviction. Similarly, the “heart,” or intention of a group of worshippers is considered more pleasing to God than the number of members at a given service. Therefore, what makes it powerful differs from traditional animistic practice.

Musical thought is not limited to the relationship between humans and the supernatural realm. There are many other categories that could be examined regarding

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<sup>6</sup> Moshe Idel, “Conceptualizations of Music in Jewish Mysticism,” in *Enchanting Powers: Music in the World’s Religions*, ed. Lawrence E. Sullivan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 169-72.

<sup>7</sup> Matt Redman, “The Heart of Worship,” *The Heart of Worship*, Worship Together, 1999.

concepts in music, many of which are addressed by Nettl. One example is the hierarchy of words or music. Native American societies often employ vocables rather than lengthy texts, elevating sound over text. Blackfoot Indians believe that singing is an act entirely different from speaking, and assert the two actions should not closely resemble one other. They believe that Western music uses too many words, as demonstrated in Christian traditions where lengthy poetic hymn texts are employed.<sup>8</sup>

Even the terms and taxonomies attributed to “music” may differ between belief systems. A notable example is the musical structure within Islam. The formal basis of the term *musiqi* is similar to the Western concept of music. Both terms have a common notion of musicality, or an organization of sound in time. For Muslims, however, the appropriate use of the term *musiqi* is determined by function. To an unknowing ear, the Muslim call to prayer would receive the label “music.” To Muslims, however, it would be profane to think of the call to prayer as *musiqi*, because the notion of musicality is associated with irreligious activity and the call to prayer is a sacred event.<sup>9</sup>

In some forms of Buddhist tradition, chant is not conceptualized in the category of “music.” Although seemingly contradictory from a Western perspective, ordained monks in the Buddhist tradition of Thailand are not allowed to sing, even though their chanting uses conventions of organized sound. The priests’ performance is described as *thet*, which means “to preach,” indicating that categories of music are determined by function and not sound property.<sup>10</sup> For both Muslims and Thai Buddhists, the notion of music has been encoded to mean something that would not inherently be understood to those

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<sup>8</sup> Nettl, 60.

<sup>9</sup> Hiromi Lorraine Sakata, *Music in the mind: The concepts of music and musician in Afghanistan* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1983), 43.

<sup>10</sup> Terry E. Miller and Andrew Shahriari, *World Music: A Global Journey* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 3.

outside of their traditions. The function of the sound determines how it is labeled, not such properties as pitch and rhythm.

### Musical Change

Concepts and categories related to music and music making are also susceptible to change. This is what British ethnomusicologist John Blacking describes as true musical change, rather than stylistic shifts:

We should not be surprised by innovation, acculturation, and superficial changes in musical performance. They are to be expected, given the adaptive nature of the organism. The most interesting and characteristically human features of music are not stylistic change and individual variation in performance, but *non*-change and the repetition of carefully rehearsed passages of music. This is why truly *musical* changes are not common and why they reveal the essence of music in a society. What is constantly changing in music is that which is least musical about it; and yet these micro-changes are the raw material out of which the changes are made, and in the context of performance they are evidence of the meanings that participants attach to the music.<sup>11</sup>

Blacking proposes that musical innovation and musical change are not mutually exclusive. Musical innovation occurs when styles change without a significant change in thought, such as shifting trends in popular music or stylistic evolution between the eras of Western art music. Musical change occurs when a shift happens in conceptions surrounding music. This may or may not result in a change of style.

An example of change in musical thought with consistency in musical sound is found in the music of Native American cultures. Nettl observed this phenomenon among the Blackfoot Indians. Traditionally, Blackfoot music was a medium that reinforced Blackfoot culture and was a conduit for communication between humans and the supernatural. These roles have been replaced by the use of music as a way to present

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<sup>11</sup> John Blacking, *Music, Culture, and Experience: Selected Papers of John Blacking*, ed., Reginald Byron (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 154.

Blackfoot culture to the outside world. Previously, the specific content of each song gave it value. Now, it is the *act* of singing that validates the action. In this scenario, change occurred in the purpose and meaning of music making, even though the external expression stayed the same.<sup>12</sup>

The adoption of Christianity by members of the South African Venda society involves change in concept as well as change in external expression. Blacking asserted that traditional sounds and instruments were considered taboo by missionaries, which made it necessary for converted Venda Christians to adopt the Western musical system. For first generation Venda Christians, the meaning and value of traditional sounds changed from their former animistic practices. They formed new ideologies concerning the relationship between sound and the supernatural. This resulted in a drastic shift in musical performance; traditional African practice was replaced by Western Christian practice.<sup>13</sup>

The setting of the current study is similar to the circumstances for change surrounding the Venda people group. For centuries, Christian missionaries have introduced their religion and its surrounding cultural practices to non-Western religions and cultures. Music presented by missionaries had a certain set of external realities, including form, instrumentation, and harmonic and rhythmic structures, that were unfamiliar in animistic societies. This introduction, however, was not merely the exchange of notes and rhythms. Members of animistic societies were also unfamiliar with Western concepts of music. Animistic cultures ontologically bind together music, dance, and ritual, and conceive of no boundary between religious music and secular

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<sup>12</sup> Nettl, 120-2.

<sup>13</sup> Blacking., 150.

music. Those who chose to convert to Christianity had to undergo a radical shift in concept, as they now had separate music from dance and ritual and erect boundaries between the sacred and profane. Christian missionaries labeled animistic music as “profane,” because of its association with former spirits.

In these scenarios, an entire music system is adopted in a conclusive manner that would have been unlikely without change in musical ideology. It necessitated the construction of a new sense of morality in music. According to Blacking, adoptions of new musical systems do not occur unless preceded by change in musical thought. Stylistic shifts may occur, but the most dramatic changes must be caused by shifts in ideology.

### **Statement of Problem**

A study in musical thought is not unique. Along with Nettl’s study on Blackfoot musical thought, there are noteworthy examples which examine various religions and cultures, with each religion and culture possessing specific performance practices. This study adds to these addresses by examining another religious culture that has formed from its unique history, music, and ideology. As stated by Nettl, “every culture ought to be thus examined.”<sup>14</sup> The need for this study is the need for a study of this type within a former missionary community.

Western missionaries have changed the musical landscape of the world. The influence is less prominent in Asia, but it strongly reaches to Oceania, Africa, and South America. These areas have experienced the same trade of music practice and concept, yet many are largely unexplored in regards to the original change, changes that followed, the current forms that are practiced, and the current conceptions of religious music.

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<sup>14</sup> Nettl, 3.

Mennonite missionaries did write histories, but cultural practice, including music, is rarely mentioned. The limited information available through these accounts is written from etic perspectives, and the topic is approached in a manner more factual than philosophic.

Additionally, this research adds to the canon of Mennonite studies. Since the announcement that there were more African Mennonites than North American Mennonites, questions have surfaced regarding the meaning of Mennonite, such as the ways the church is united, even in the midst of varying cultural expressions.<sup>15</sup> The foremost Mennonite ethnomusicologist, Mary Oyer, wrote these insightful words: “Studying hymnody helps gain perspective on who we are, what we believe, and how our culture is changing. It reveals changing theological emphases and evolving patterns of worship.”<sup>16</sup> The need for this research is not only to gain more insight on musical thought in a community not yet studied, but also to contribute to research involving the Mennonite denomination as it seeks to understand its influence and identity around the world.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to illuminate musical thought among members of the Congolese Mennonite Church. Through using Nettl’s method for identifying musical thought among Blackfoot Indians, Congolese Mennonite church music will be examined through information from informants of differing station and observations of rehearsals and performances. The scope of musical thought will encompass:

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<sup>15</sup> Everett Thomas. “Shifting South: An Interview with Mennonite World Conference Leaders Nancy Heisey and Nzash Lumeya.” *The Mennonite* 6, no. 13 (2003): 14-16.

<sup>16</sup> Mary K. Oyer, “The Sound in the Land,” in *Sound in the Land: Essays on Mennonites and Music*, eds. Maureen Epp and Carol Ann Weaver (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 2005), 21.

- 1) Current Classification and Function. This includes how musical sounds are distinguished from one another. Different categories of music are identified, as well as their purpose, or how they function in the context of the worship service.
- 2) History. This includes a timeline of changes in style and points of debate over the one hundred year existence of the Congolese Mennonite Church. Current perceptions of changes and reasons for changes are addressed. Thought on traditional African music making before missionary arrival is also discussed.
- 3) Nature of sacred music and music making. This addresses the relationship between music and the supernatural, such as the effect of music in both human and supernatural realms. It also identifies thoughts regarding sacredness in musical sound and factors that make music powerful.
- 4) Boundaries between sacred and profane. This identifies current thought regarding Mennonite identity, including what aspects of music and music making are acceptable and what aspects are forbidden. The strictness of observation of this boundary is also considered.

### **Limitations and Assumptions**

#### **Limitations**

This study examines current forms and practices, such as musical attributes for various types of songs and the structure of church choirs. The goal of the study does not include the transcription of a body of songs. Elements of music will be studied along with music in its context, but the main purpose is to discover the function of music in this

segment of society. Transcriptions are only included as they support the discussion on musical thought.

Themes in musical thought will be determined by studying various Mennonite congregations throughout the capital city of Kinshasa, rather than by surveying churches throughout the country. Cultural information outside the Congolese Mennonite Church will not be sought; only Congolese Mennonite perspectives on the outside world will be considered. Nationwide, music practices in Mennonite churches are not highly codified, partially because of the country's variety and vastness. Mennonite churches in Congo can be categorized in various ways, one of which is city or rural. It is typically thought that churches in the city are where new ideas were and are created, including songs written by Africans.<sup>17</sup> These churches are also more apt to have electricity, allowing for synthesizers and new possibilities for music making. Thoughts on concept, then, may be different than in a rural church that has not had as much exposure to new songs and ideas. With this information, there is some basis of relating congregations in Kinshasa to the rest of the country.

Difficulties can arise when attempting to articulate belief regarding music. Discrepancies can occur even in a single congregation. When asked to define such concepts in any religious community, worshippers may vary in their response. Many churches, like the Mennonite church of this author's youth, endure years of struggle as they determine how music should function in the church, what styles of music should be used, and with what posture music should be performed.

Concept can be difficult to determine in the best of circumstances, and ideal circumstances rarely occur. In his study on Blackfoot musical thought, Nettl concludes

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<sup>17</sup> Lapp, 8-9.



by listing a number of problems that hindered his work, such as brevity of field experience, lack of historical depth, and the Blackfoot people's own belief that much of their tradition had been forgotten. He honestly admits, "at best I have reconstructed a dinosaur from a bone in its tail."<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, Nettl's work is illuminating, and conceptual themes can be determined from his study. Even though dissimilar thoughts may occur, themes in concept can be identified among practitioners of the same belief system.

### Assumptions

In the present study, general assertions are made regarding the nature of traditional, Congolese animist music and traditional Mennonite music making, including the mindset of missionaries. This does not account for the range of musical practice, but it is hoped that the following information represents central belief. A brief history of Christianity in Congo is also included to provide background into three major Christian forces in DR Congo: the Catholic Church, Protestant denominations, and churches formed out of the revivalist movement.

### **Traditional African Religious Practices**

Much of traditional African culture is unknown, including details regarding music utilization in festivals and rituals. However, general tenets of these traditions can be constructed from surviving artifacts and the study of shamanism and animism in other areas of the world. Africa is one of the largest continents and includes a variety of climates and ways of living. Musically, there have been innumerable traditions and styles represented by hundreds of people groups, most of which are now lost. The first field recordings of African music took place in 1905, around the same time as interest in

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<sup>18</sup> Nettl, 173.

musical scholarship concerning the continent was developing. Prior to this, there were no recordings, and there was a lack of written documentation on African traditional music. Current researchers must rely on archeology, recordings from the early twentieth century, and analysis of the oral histories that have been passed down to recent generations.

The uncovering of traditions has been complicated by outside forces. Northern Africa is largely under Arabic influence, and sub-saharan Africa is largely influenced by European interest. In sub-saharan Africa, the act of colonization redefined communities by grouping tribes together, thereby lessening homogeneity in tribal societies. This process, combined with other factors such as war, famine, and migration, gave rise to population mixture, making studies of traditional practices virtually impossible. In addition, traditional religions typically function on a small scale and without religious writing, making oral history the only means by which knowledge is transferred. Despite these obstacles, it is possible to know tendencies and themes in ideology.<sup>19</sup>

African religion is centered around the concept of ritual. Ritual is not a static form, but serves to constantly create and reinforce religious and social structures. In African ideology, ritual is bound together with music and religion; indeed, traditional African belief cannot ontologically separate music, religion, and ritual into three different components. They are one action.<sup>20</sup>

This, in part, is due to the relationship of music to the supernatural. There are strong associations between musical sounds and spirits or ancestors, as witnessed by this observation of animistic music in Madagascar:

This distinction is especially important in Betsimisaraka *tromba* practice because particular spirits have specific favorite *tromba morceaux* to which

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<sup>19</sup> Otto Karolyi, *Traditional African and Oriental Music* (London: Penguin Publishing, 1998), 3-4.

<sup>20</sup> Avorgbeder, 4.

they will respond — they might not arrive in the present at all if the proper compositions are not performed for them.<sup>21</sup>

Specific melodic, rhythmic, gestural and verbal modes become exclusively attached with certain spirits, or groups of spirits. If the appropriate music is not played, or not played well, the spirit or spirits represented will not be present.<sup>22</sup> Songs must be performed at appropriate times, and the better the performance, the more likely the spirit would make itself manifest to the performer.

Also, the social aspect of ritual can make a ceremony more powerful, as witnessed in this account from the Shambaa people of Tanzania.

The men gather outside, smoking cigarettes of local tobacco wrapped in pieces of torn newspaper. They exchange prolonged greetings and news of the day, casting watchful eyes on the progress of activities. The steady flow of arriving guests — women, men, and children — heralds a good dance. As everyone knows, the more participants in the *mphungwa*, the more power, or *nguvu*, can be used for healing.<sup>23</sup>

Music is actively participated in by everyone and not typically viewed as an individual event. Passively listening to music is an unusual concept; rhythmic clapping and stamping almost always occur. While professional musicians are held in a place of respect, it is understood that a work of art created by an individual is made complete by becoming a shared functional statement in the community, thus negating any notion of an individual as “genius.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ron Emoff, “Maresaka and the Value of Things: *Tromba* Spirit Possession on the East Coast of Madagascar,” in *The Interrelatedness of Music, Religion, and Ritual in African Performance Practice*, ed. Daniel K. Avorgbedor (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), 144.

<sup>22</sup> Avorgbedor, 6.

<sup>23</sup> Barbara Thompson, “Where all Things Meet: Performing Spiritscape in Shambaa Healing,” in *The Interrelatedness of Music, Religion, and Ritual in African Performance Practice*, ed. Daniel K. Avorgbedor (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), 221.

<sup>24</sup> Karolyi, 51.

## Historical Mennonite Practices

During their earliest days in the sixteenth century, the Mennonites, often referred to as Anabaptists, were viewed as radicals. Their strong belief in adult baptism made them vastly unpopular with other traditions that were forming around the time of the Reformation. They were persecuted and cast aside in society, which forced them to become isolated and disconnected with the outside world. Mennonites were encouraged not to behave frivolously in word or deed. They lived calm and quiet lives, stressing the value of moral piety.<sup>25</sup>

Early Anabaptist doctrine reveals an aversion to expressive singing. Conrad Grebel, one of the most influential early leaders, believed that no hymns should be sung at meetings because the New Testament does not contain a specific commandment to sing. While not all early leaders felt the same way, singing was a source of contention.<sup>26</sup> Peter Riedemann, another early leader, strictly rejected the aesthetic appreciation of music, pronouncing it “sinful.” He believed that the sole purpose of singing was to express faith. He referred to hymns as spiritual songs, because they had been inspired by the spirit and must be sung in the spirit of Christ. Those who sang only to hear the sweet sound of music sinned greatly against God.<sup>27</sup>

Communal singing, however, has become a trait of the Mennonite church through active congregational participation and abounding interest in choral singing. Stylistically, Mennonite singing has historically consisted of unaccompanied, four-part hymn singing. People in the congregation could not depend on instruments to play the parts for them, so

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<sup>25</sup> Claus-Peter Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History, 1525-1618* (London: Cornell University Press, 1972), 143.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 343.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

everyone had to contribute. This was seen as the best way to encourage participation, which was strongly valued. According to church leaders, this generated a unified community that worships God rather than one that focuses on itself.<sup>28</sup> In addition, hymn singing was an agent for teaching spiritual truths because it was constructed around rich, theological texts.

Singing in the Church has become paramount to its identity. Although the Mennonite Church in North America has undergone its own set of changes, four-part hymn singing remains a cultural identifier, as well as choir singing. Churches in North America host youth choir festivals, and some church choirs produce their own CDs. Other choral organizations include the Kansas Mennonite Men's Chorus and the West Coast Mennonite Chamber Choir.

### **Differences and Similarities**

Music in both African and Mennonite cultures is considered essential in the religious experience, although attitudes and practices differ. Those practicing traditional animistic traditions had no concept of division between sacred and secular, while Mennonites perceive sharp incompatibilities between "church" and "world." Animism was practiced in isolation; there was no other option for religion. Everyone participated in the same rituals.

Those practicing traditional African religion revel in sound and perceive of no division between religious and aesthetic music. Mennonites, however, were keenly aware of an aesthetic dimension in music and attempted to avoid it. Religion, music, and movement were tied together for the Africans, but were separate entities for the

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<sup>28</sup> Katie J. Graber, "Identity and the Hymnal: Can Music Make a Person Mennonite?" in *Sound in the Land: Essays on Mennonites and Music*, eds. Maureen Epp and Carol Ann Weaver (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 2005), 66.

Mennonites. Some leaders of the early Mennonite church considered sound to be sinful, because it can be pleasurable. Sinful associations lessened with time, but the roots that fostered stoicism and suspicion of exuberant worship practices were firmly planted.

The origins of music in African traditional belief are spirits who gave songs to humans. Mennonites employ lengthy texts that either come from modified passages from the Bible or newly composed poetry. Also, in traditional belief, spirits are pleased with skill and excess, and through these qualities can be persuaded to arrive at ceremonies to either heal or possess. The goal of singing for Mennonites is adoration and the teaching of doctrine.

There are countless differences between the two musical traditions, most of which are polarized. There is one, however, that is the same: widespread participation is valued in both African and Mennonite culture. For traditional African practice, more participation results in more power. For traditional Mennonite practice, more participation results in more unity. Both practices value the community over the individual, which is a strong point of compatibility.

### **History of Christianity in Congo Since Colonization**

The geographic location of DR Congo has had several different name and regime changes since first coming under European control in 1835. Congo Free State (1835-1909) was a private colony established by Leopold II of Belgium, who exploited those indigenous to the area for his own personal gain. The Congolese were harassed, mutilated or even put to death if they did not meet his quotas for goods such as sap from rubber plants and ivory.<sup>29</sup> However, these atrocities did not escape the notice of the

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas E. Turner, "Democratic Republic of the Congo" in *New Encyclopedia of Africa*, 2nd ed.

international community, especially European and North American humanitarian societies. In 1908, the area was taken from Leopold and was transformed into a colony referred to as Belgian Congo, which was economically controlled by Belgian private interests. Meanwhile, the Catholic Church was busy proselytizing in the area, setting up schools and social services, the only means for these services in the area.

Although the conditions during the period of Belgian Congo were not as brutal as under Leopold II, the Congolese sought independence from European control. After a few failed revolutionary attempts, Congo attained independence on June 30, 1960. The area became known as Congo-Leopoldville (1960-1965), and later Zaire (1965-1996) under the leadership of Joseph-Désiré Mobutu. Mobutu promoted a doctrine of authenticity, which encouraged a return to African roots. This conflicted with the Catholic Church, which had previously been the primary influence for Congolese culture, education, and social services.

Mobutu became a self-proclaimed Messiah and his People's Revolutionary Movement was declared a religion. Economically, Mobutu attacked the Belgian dominated corporations and attempted to form a new capitalistic class for which he pronounced himself the leader. This was successful in the short term, but catastrophic in the long term. The passing years left the country even more impoverished. The Catholic Church was the main source of opposition to Mobutu, offering an alternative to the doctrine of authenticity and openly decrying his People's Revolutionary Movement. In 1992, thousands of Catholics and other Christians marched for a reopening of the Sovereign National Conference (CNS), closed by Mobutu. Over thirty demonstrators were killed.

Around the same time, a broadly based democracy movement was initiated. The Congolese wanted change, but could not rally enough military strength to overthrow Mobutu until 1996. Under the leadership of Laurent-Désiré Kabila, Mobutu was overthrown and Zaire became known as Democratic Republic of Congo. This was not a peaceful time, however, as years of war ensued. In 2001, Kabila was assassinated, and his son, Joseph, became the new leader. A cease fire was issued in 2002 and a transitional government took power in 2003, opening the doors for progress. Progress led to presidential voting in 2006 and Joseph Kabila was officially elected for his position.

Joseph Kabila is the current president, and he remains relatively popular. Overall, DR Congo is much more unified and nationalistic than in the past. As with many African countries, borders were erected around tribes, including warring tribes, that did not desire to become a single colony or country. However, shared hardships, such as those endured under Leopold II and the Mobutu regime, inspired unity as Congolese joined together in a spirit of revolution. Unfortunately, the aftereffects of years of atrocities and the pillages of war make Congo a volatile environment, and poverty is widespread.

This is a society that has undergone great change and seen great violence, but even in the midst of these conditions, the Christian religion steadily grows. Many millions of Congolese are Catholics and there is now a Congolese cardinal. Protestant denominations, including the Mennonite church, are consistently gaining more converts.<sup>30</sup> The strongest religious influence today is spawned from a revivalist movement. Revivalist movements are not unique to Congo. The development of revivalists churches is an independent phenomenon observed in societies around the world, usually with no structured ties between various movements. Often referred to as

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.



“prophetic” or “healing” churches, established revivalist churches emerged in Kinshasa during the 1980s. These churches have no Western ties; they were formed as a reaction to colonialism and missionary churches.<sup>31</sup>

Revival churches bring together Congolese from various backgrounds, tribes, and languages. They invite both those with the social category of “indigenous” and the social status of *évolué*, which refers to Westernized Congolese. Worshippers in this tradition are seen as equals; everyone has the same power to access the Holy Spirit, which is a distinctive feature in this movement. Intimate contact with the Holy Spirit through visions, trance, seizure, and glossolalia, or the practice of “speaking in tongues,” are characteristics of revivalists churches.<sup>32</sup>

Today, there are three distinct Christian movements in DR Congo: the Catholic Church, Protestant denominations, and revival churches. The Congolese Mennonite Church is a Protestant church that has been influenced heavily by revival churches. The influence of the revivalist movement is not only witnessed among Congolese Mennonites, but rather it extends through all Protestant denominations and has even influenced practice in the Catholic Church.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

The purpose of this section is to define key terms, or unusual terms and concepts that will be used in this study. Foreign terms are the primary focus, as they are not translated throughout the study.

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<sup>31</sup> René Devisch, “‘Pillaging Jesus’: Healing Churches and the Villagisation of Kinshasa,” *Africa* 66, no. 4 (1996): 555.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 556.

Musical Thought. The conceptions, ideas, and assumptions that underlie the songs themselves and that govern the kinds of behavior that lead to the production and consumption of musical sound.<sup>33</sup>

*Adoration.* This is a French term that is translated as “worship.” It refers to a style of music that is typically slow and used to bring worshippers into an altered state described as “the presence of God.”

*Adoration Group.* This is an ensemble that performs *adoration* music.

*Louange.* This is a French term that is translated as “praise.” It refers to a style of music that is quick and includes dancing.

*Cantique.* This is a French term with the direct translation of “song.” It refers to individual songs that originated from missionaries. It also refers to the book in which the hymns are found.

*Melodie.* This is a French term with the direct translation of “melody.” The meaning differs from melody, or tune. It describes the concept of sound as a complete unit, rather than distinguishing different elements of music such as pitch and rhythm.

### Summary

Music is comprised of both sound and musical thought, or concepts that surround music and music making. This is a study that is primarily concerned with musical thought. There is more than one approach to studying musical thought, but the present study is modeled after Nettl’s observation of musical thought among the Blackfoot Indians. The concepts and methods used by Nettl are applied to Congolese Mennonite congregations in the capital city of Kinshasa, DR Congo. The areas of musical thought

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<sup>33</sup> Nettl, 2.

discussed include current classification of function, history of musical change and how these changes are perceived by Congolese Mennonites, the nature of sacred music and music making, and boundaries between sacred and profane in the Congolese Mennonite mind.

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### **Introduction**

Every culture possesses a body of music that includes both sound and concepts surrounding sound. Musical properties and ideas vary between societies, creating numerous possibilities for research. Studies have been conducted with an emphasis of musical thought, but there are many more that could be examined in this manner. The community of the present study is the Congolese Mennonite Church, which is the product of missionary church planting. This study also adds to literature regarding music making in cultures that have been heavily influenced by Western missionaries, an area of research which is often neglected.

The aim of this study is to apply Bruno Nettl's method for studying Blackfoot Indians to the Congolese Mennonite Church. Musical thought, for the purpose of the present study, is divided into four areas: current classification and function, history of change, the nature of sacred music and music making, and boundaries between the sacred and secular. By examining these four areas, concepts and themes of music among Congolese Mennonites will be identified and discussed.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature that surrounds the topic of musical thought and Mennonites in Congo. The chapter is organized by two types of studies: those that have formed the conceptual framework for the study and those that have provided the cultural background to this study.

The conceptual framework for the present study does not fall into the category of post-modern study. Currently, most ethnomusicological studies have been influenced by postmodernism, favoring interpretation through intellectual approaches borrowed from other studies. These approaches include: gender studies and feminist theories; Marxist interpretations; cognitive studies; semiotic approaches; and performance studies. Studies may also address issues such as identity, post-colonialism, and politics.<sup>34</sup> Although this approach could possibly work in the future, the conceptual framework for the present study was most heavily influenced by Alan P. Merriam and Bruno Nettl. Although not an impetus for the post-modern movement, Nettl has influenced the course of ethnomusicology for over the last fifty years, and his work is viewed by many as representing “both common sense and the mainstream of the profession.”<sup>35</sup> As ethnomusicology branches towards post-modern criticism, his work remains highly regarded by most ethnomusicologists.

The cultural literature does not include studies specifically surrounding Mennonite music practice, although many such studies exist. Nor does it include studies on Congolese Mennonite culture that focus on music. Instead, this set of literature is comprised of three sources that represent both insider and outsider perspectives on the history and culture of Congolese Mennonites. Although music is not the primary focus, the cultural practice is mentioned and provides insight into how the church has changed over its century existence. The early accounts are from a Western, missionary prospective; the latest account is from an African perspective. This formed the basis of

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<sup>34</sup> Miller, 11.

<sup>35</sup> Miller, 10.

understanding the cultural contexts, even though these sources are limited by their perspective and scope, at least for the purposes of this study.

## Merriam and Nettl

### Structure

After writing the groundbreaking book, *The Anthropology of Music*, Merriam used his theories in what is considered the seminal study on musical thought: *Ethnomusicology of the Flathead Indians*.<sup>36</sup> For the first time, musical ideas were comprehensively incorporated into an ethnographic account by an acclaimed researcher, unlike previous ethnomusicologists who did not examine non-Western music with respect to its context.<sup>37</sup> Early researchers focused on either cultural context or sound, which included notating music, describing styles, and classifying instruments into families, such as chordophone, idiophone, aerophone, and membranophone.<sup>38</sup>

*Ethnomusicology of the Flathead Indians* is divided into two sections: “Ethnography” and “Songs and Analysis.” In *The Anthropology of Music*, Merriam advocated for a three part division of music practice: concept, behavior, and sound. Merriam justifies his later retreat to a two-part structure by stating that there are two types of music theories, one that is a theory of what music is and does, another that is the theory of the structure of musical sound.<sup>39</sup> He describes the theory of what music is and does first, by placing the ethnographic section at the beginning of his book. He explains, “All people, in no matter what culture, must be able to place their music firmly in the context of the totality of their beliefs, experiences, and activities, for without such ties,

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<sup>36</sup> Alan P. Merriam, *Ethnomusicology of the Flathead Indians* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967).

<sup>37</sup> Nettl, 10.

<sup>38</sup> Miller, 9.

<sup>39</sup> Nettl, 1.

music cannot exist.”<sup>40</sup> For him, placing concept first was the preferred method of organization, but including description of sound and transcription of songs remained important.

Bruno Nettl’s published research with the Blackfoot Indians, who dwell not far from the Flathead Indians of Merriam’s study. His work is inspired by Merriam’s; Nettl references him often and employs a similar model. But dissimilar to Merriam, Nettl’s book is not in two parts and he does not include a section with transcribed and analyzed songs. Discussion surrounding musical style is not incorporated at all beyond what is useful to illuminate musical ideas. He takes Merriam’s original three part concept, the division of music into concept, behavior, and sound, and describes them all together, placing them under four broad categories of musical thought. He considered overarching concepts to be the appropriate way to present Blackfoot musical culture, which is the aim of the present study concerning Congolese Mennonites.

### Concepts

The present study is modeled after concepts for musical thought as described by Nettl, who was heavily influenced by Merriam. Nettl’s study uses four different points to grasp Blackfoot ideas about music: (1) conceptions of the general character of music; (2) ideas about music as it exists in time — its origins, history, sources, and changeability music in society; (3) the society of both human and supernatural figures; (4) conceptions of music as a system of sound, as an art.<sup>41</sup> Each of these areas is from the questions raised by Merriam in his Flathead study. Each area informed the categories presented in

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<sup>40</sup> Merriam, 3.

<sup>41</sup> Nettl, 12.

the present study, except the last category. Instead of examining music as a system of sound, the present study discusses boundaries between sacred and secular.

Nettl's findings on the conceptual understanding of the character of music encompass ideas of music and musicianship. These include, but are not limited to, dichotomies of individual and group participation, ownership of music, and value statements, such as what makes music or a musician "good." These concerns were first articulated by Merriam, and then later adapted by Nettl for his own use. Nettl observed that song, or vocal music, is the basis of the system of music. Through interviews and conversations with Blackfoot informants, Nettl finds that song texts are not as highly regarded as the act of singing. Using Merriam's comparative technique, whereby informants compare their musical system to music of other cultures, the opinion was identified that Western music is too much about words,<sup>42</sup> and that many Blackfeet thought that singing is not anything special to Westerners, like it is for them.<sup>43</sup>

The second area of thought consists of origins, history, sources, and changeability. One attribute of his work that did not come from Merriam is his desire to uncover musical history from the Blackfoot perspective, which is modeled in the present study. In this case, history includes elements like the development of different song repertoires and Blackfoot perceptions of outside forces and influences over the course of their history. Nettl does, however, go beyond Blackfoot perception and supplements his findings with an examination of the structure of Blackfoot repertoire and the relationship of its genres and styles.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 104.



The third area is directly inspired by Merriam's study. He organizes his examination of relationships between music and the supernatural by discussing some of the same questions, including, "What makes songs powerful?" and "Who owns the songs and how do they originate?" The relationship between music and the supernatural is Merriam's first concern on his work with Flathead Indians. He explores origins of music and discovers that songs are either "make-up," meaning they were created by man, or they were given to man through spirits. Through conducting interviews with Flathead informants, he finds that the second song source, songs given by spirits, is regarded as more important, creating a hierarchy in musical conception. Not all songs are valued equally because of how they relate to the supernatural.

The fourth area is also directly from Merriam. Merriam gives a comprehensive assessment on thoughts about aesthetic music in contrast to functional music by comparing Flathead music to Western art music. Nettl explains the functional nature of Blackfoot music by comparing Blackfoot ideas to ideas that guide Western art music. Rather than looking at art from a distance and appreciating it "for its own sake," music provides structure to Blackfoot society. Nettl suggests, "in music it was and is more important for the Blackfeet to have a concise system of theory and designation, not particularly for describing musical practice, but more in order to show that they have a systematically organized cultural system."<sup>45</sup>

### **Other Studies on Musical Thought**

During the 1980s, concept-based studies emerged by researchers exploring various cultures, most of which were animistic in belief. Like Merriam and Nettl, the remainder of the studies for this section of the review demonstrate how external

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 161.

manifestations of music are governed by undercurrents of musical thought. The model for the present study is most like Nettl's, and the prescribed method is also similar to Merriam's and Nettl's: conversations with informants and observations. However, other models and preoccupations influenced the concept of the present study, as well as considerations for method. The following studies primarily consider musical thought in animistic culture, including studies from North American, South America, and Africa. A study on the music of Afghanistan was also consulted.

In each study, musical thought is illuminated through such methods as the examination of terminology, the discussion of origins with informants, and observations of performance practice and social interaction. Each study is organized according to what the researcher deemed as the most important facet of musical life among their respective, studied culture. They found a variety of cultural aspects to order and focus their studies. Although these studies share a common tie to Merriam's initial work, they have varying preoccupations because each society possesses its own cultural norms. This necessitates flexible models that can examine musical systems using a variety of methods. Nettl wrote, "Any one culture could surely be viewed in several ways; but also, for each culture there may be a limited number of approaches that work."<sup>46</sup> Finding the approach most suitable is the challenge of these studies.

#### Additional Studies

John Richard Haefer's study<sup>47</sup> on the musical ideas of the Papago Indians of southern Arizona was inspired by a 1938 paper published by George Herzog titled

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>47</sup> John Richard Haefer, "Musical Thought in Papago Culture" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1981).

“Music in the Thinking of the American Indian,”<sup>48</sup> which is considered the first attempt to research music using the beliefs described by Native Americans, rather than transcribing songs or describing instruments. To expand on this idea, Haefer’s goal was to show how the musical domain of Papago society is led by concepts and thought patterns which control the function and use of Papago music performance.

Unlike Merriam and Nettl, Haefner formally interviewed only one subject: an elderly, Papago woman. While recognizing that other members in Papago culture may hold different views, he considered her beliefs to be representative of the culture in general. In addition, he analyzed musical thought through linguistic analysis of song texts and language used during rehearsals and performances. He defended the choice through stating that Papago people more readily verbalize their musical categories and values through texts and performance than through formal interviews. Therefore, text and speech during performance more effectively provide insight into the inner world of the performer than by with a conversation with an outsider.<sup>49</sup> Haefer emphasized the importance of observation and gleaning information from interaction and language in rehearsal and performance, not just listening to music and conducting interviews. This emphasis was considered during the observation in the present study.

Haefner discovers various categories used to describe song classification and concludes that Papago thinking about music centers on their theory of *ñe’i*. *Ñe’i* can be described as the canon of traditional songs, but is also characterized as a mode of thought. This theory states the importance of recognizing the presence of the human and

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<sup>48</sup> George Herzog, “Music in the Thinking of the American Indian,” *Peabody Bulletin*. May 1938. 1-5.

<sup>49</sup> Haefer., 342.

non-human worlds and describes how these worlds integrate into ceremonial life.<sup>50</sup> He sought to show how these concepts defined the musical value system and even governed the composition of music within Papago society. Composition of new songs provided insight into musical thought, which is an idea addressed in the current study. In most societies, songs are thought to have an origin, and the origin may illuminate hierarchy in music. The relationship between composition and song is important.

Ruth M. Stone, published *Let the Inside be Sweet: The Interpretation of Music Event among the Kpelle of Liberia*,<sup>51</sup> another study in animism. She begins her account by addressing the schism that had occurred between “sound” and “behavior” ethnomusicologists, and advocates for a middle ground between the two positions. For example, rather than only transcribing songs, a practice of “sound” ethnomusicologists, or only addressing the action of music making, a practice of the “behavior” ethnomusicologists, she integrates the two methods through the analysis of a music event, or a single ceremony.

She does this in order to examine the active process of music creation, rather than by looking at “a series of objects frozen in time and space,”<sup>52</sup> a phrase which is made in reference to recordings and transcriptions of songs. These methods do not capture the temporal nature of ritual. This is another support for not making the study full of transcriptions. Nettl did not include them because he did not deem them necessary to present his case. The present study does not include them for both reasons: to account for

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>51</sup> Ruth M. Stone, *Let the Inside be Sweet: The Interpretation of Music Event among the Kpelle of Liberia* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 7.

the improvisatory, evolving nature of music and how it dwells in time, and because of the belief that it is not always necessary when articulating musical thought.

Stone addresses terms, taxonomies, and the significance of song, as with the other studies in this part of the review, but time and process are her primary concerns. For the Kpelle, boundaries of time during ceremonies are governed by feelings of synchronization by the performers. When the performers, through communication and the making of necessary adjustments, feel they have reached a certain state of “flow,” they then are permitted to “go down the road,” or begin another song.<sup>53</sup> Stone discovered that time and process are integral parts of music making in Kpelle culture. This informed her decision to evaluate process in a single ceremony, rather than attempting to transcribe the body of songs included in the ceremony.

Anthropologist Anthony Seeger published a study on musical thought with the Suyá people of South America as his subjects.<sup>54</sup> As with previous studies, the recognition of terms and taxonomies proves essential. Virtually all music Suyá perform is vocal music, so Seeger looks for categories among song and other vocal art forms. He discovers three categories in addition to what he translates as “song”: speech, instruction, and invocation. These three categories may be “sung,” but are not thought of as song by Suyá because they have other functions.<sup>55</sup> Through these findings, Seeger is emphatic that music and speech should be studied together. In the study of this society, text was the key identifier in determining if a sample was considered “song.”

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 102-7.

<sup>54</sup> Anthony Seeger, *Why Suyá Sing: A Musical Anthropology of an Amazonian People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 25.

Determining categories was an important first step to determining his central questions, which are deceptively simple: “Why is the music performed in that way rather than another?” and “Why perform music at all in a given situation in a society?” He accomplished this by living among the Suyá and becoming a participant observer. He learned through practice, conversation, and by developing close friendships.<sup>56</sup> The question “why” was used to strengthen the third point of the present study: the sacred nature of sound. This question was asked directly to informants, rather than through participant observation and conversation.

Like Stone, Seeger is concerned with music as process. He recognizes that ceremonies are not static and uses a singular event as the basis of his study.

We have investigated the distinctive features of musical form and the transcendent origins of Suyá songs. But music is more than sound and cosmology. It is performed by members of a community in certain places and at certain times, often with an audience composed of other members of the community. Music is the entire process of conceptualization, realization, and evaluation of music.<sup>57</sup>

He advocates for more research with temporal analysis and warns anthropologists against making rules out of observed creative acts. Observed aspects of musical performance may be, in that moment, only one choice among many other alternatives.<sup>58</sup> This is another supporting statement for not including transcriptions.

In the conclusion of his study, he lists themes that aid answering his central question, “Why do Suyá Sing?” Through his time living among the people, themes were determined, including the achievement of euphoria and expressing how Suyá feel, the reinforcement of belief, such as the three-part nature (physical, societal, and spiritual) of

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 21-4.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 85-6.

human beings, and the reinforcement of societal structures, such as rites of passage and the importance of communal participation. A less pervasive theme was singing for survival. Unlike Merriam's findings among Flathead Indians, Suyá did not yet sing for pageants and fairs. For them, participating in music was not regarded as optional, because of the inextricable link between music and society.<sup>59</sup> His study found direct links to how music reinforces culture — a theory thought to be true in all of the studies represented, but his relationships are the clearest.

Paul Berliner's version of studying musical concept was to examine a single instrument, the *mbira* or Zimbabwe. His method was to become proficient on one specific instrument and uncover how it functions in its original context. He learned to play in the United States, then later traveled to Zimbabwe to studying and playing with Shona musicians. He desired to learn structure, history, and the *mbira*'s role in traditional culture. He describes, in great detail, the relationship between music of the *mbira* and the supernatural world. He describes how spirits dictate sounds to players of *mbira*. The *mbira* player is charged with bringing about the possession of the medium, and for keeping the spirit there. If the player relaxes his intensity of performance, the spirit leaves.<sup>60</sup>

His discovering of the relationship between music and the divine, a central preoccupation of the third area of this study, was achieved through the study of *mbira*. The *mbira* was much more than an instrument; it had sacred power. He addresses musical change in the face of Western influence, addressed by Nettl and Merriam. He found that associations had changed, and that traditional songs have survived because

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 128-37.

<sup>60</sup> Berliner, 201.

new contexts were created, such as the use of war songs in the boxing arena. He concludes, however, even with changes, the *mbira* remains a powerful symbol of traditional African culture and a means by which to connect to ancestors.<sup>61</sup>

In his study, *Music in the Mind: The Concepts of Music and Musician in Afghanistan*,<sup>62</sup> Hiromi Lorraine Sakata examines religious thought in the religion of Islam. Musical concept is explored in three different regions of the country by exploring native terms. He then takes the linguistic component of his study and seeks to demonstrate how discrepancies in terminology between regions result in different musical practices. He took one of the ideas of musical thought expressed by Merriam and Nettl and highlighted the one that seemed to be the most important to this region.

He justified this decision to focus on terminology through stating that Muslim conceptualization can seem paradoxical to the Western mind if definitions and categories are not understood.

The western notion of music emphasizes the element of sound while the Islamic sources and the interpretations of these sources speak to specific aspects, functions, consequences, or other implications of these musical sounds. Exploring native terms is important, not just substituting “music.”<sup>63</sup>

“Music” should not be carelessly applied to Islamic sounds. The term *musiqi* is generally looked upon with a certain degree of suspicion among Muslims, because of its association with liquor, adultery, and gambling. To understand Islamic music, one must first understand that the Islamic religion plays a large role in forming notions, categories, and definitions about all facets of Muslim life, including musical perception. This differs

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>62</sup> Hiromi Lorraine Sakata, *Music in the Mind: The Concepts of Music and Musician in Afghanistan* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1983).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 38.



from Merriam and Nettl's approach, where terminology was a smaller portion of the larger purpose of their respective studies.

The religion of Islam explicitly defined categories of music through knowledge from the Qu'ran, but the degree to which these categories are observed varies between communities. He researches the way *musiqi* is used in the three regions of Afghanistan that are represented in his study. He also explores the concept of musician, especially between amateur and professional musicians. By examining three contrasting regions, he found that basic notions around the country are similar, but regions where the categories are more strictly adhered to and more formalized produce different musical products than in regions with less formalized categories.<sup>64</sup>

### **Literature on Mennonites in the Congo**

The purpose of this section is to review the literature that framed understanding of the cultural context that was studied. Most histories written about this cultural setting are from outsider perspectives, and few of them address cultural issues in any detail. Nevertheless, three sources provide insight into the setting of the present study: *Thirty-Five Years in the Congo*,<sup>65</sup> compiled by William B. Weaver, *Three Score: The Story of an Emerging Mennonite Church in Central Africa*,<sup>66</sup> by Melvin J. Loewen, and the "Mennonite Churches in Central Africa" article in *Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts*.<sup>67</sup> *Anabaptist Songs* is the first volume of a Mennonite history series that described church practices from around the world. The first two were written from Western missionary

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>65</sup> William B. Weaver, *Thirty-Five Years in the Congo: A History of the Demonstrations of Divine Power in the Congo* (Chicago: Congo Inland Mission, 1945).

<sup>66</sup> Melvin J. Loewen, *Three Score: The Story of an Emerging Mennonite Church in Central Africa* (Elkhart, IN: Bethel Publishing Company, 1972).

<sup>67</sup> Eric Kumedisa, "Mennonite Churches in Central Africa" in *Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts*, eds. John A. Lapp and C. Arnold Snyder (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2006).

perspectives and provide insight into the missionary mindset of the early twentieth century. The last is from an African perspective, providing information regarding the cultural context of the present study. *Anabaptist Songs*, unlike what the title suggests, does not discuss music practice.

### Initial Meeting

In opening chapter of *Thirty-Five Years*, Weaver emphasizes that missionaries should seek to understand the “native,” especially in how the Congolese structure their society culturally, and how religion functions in the various dimensions of their lives.<sup>68</sup> Mennonite missionaries believed that the native Congolese had a great natural capacity for religion. Missionaries were previously aware of animistic practices and sought to learn as much as they could about the relationships between the spirit and human world in this specific region. They observed the people’s extreme loyalty to the chief and medicine man. For the Congolese, the medicine man was the mediator between the human and spirit worlds and was the person in the village whom everyone wanted to please. The music practice of medicine men, where special songs and dances were performed in order to entice spirits to the earth to heal sickness, was observed by missionaries. The account describes such an event: “Soon there was weird dancing of the witch doctor in the fire light as he shook the (diviner basket) and called on the spirits.”<sup>69</sup> Missionaries labeled these practices as “profane.”

Eric Kumdisa, author of “Mennonite Churches in Central Africa,” explains the Congolese perception of the initial meeting, revealing the limits of study through only one perspective. The first contacts between the missionaries and Congolese were

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 47

difficult, because colonization had heavily fostered an attitude of mistrust toward white people. The Congolese thought the white missionaries were evil. A myth circulated that white people were spirits of the dead, and they were there to cast curses upon the local, Congolese population. Many Congolese initially fled before the missionaries, out of fear. They did not know the difference between colonial administrators and those who were there to proselytize.<sup>70</sup>

### Choosing a Music System

*Thirty-Five Years* describes the debate that occurred which led to use of only Western hymns. Mennonite missionaries struggled to determine what type of music should be employed in church services.

Some missionaries think that one should use the native melodies and put sacred words to them. Others think that the native melodies have evil associations connected with them, and therefore should not be used. Some argue that our songs which are based on the chromatic scale do not come natural with the natives. 'Tis true that their melodies are in the minor key and are based on a simpler scale. However, with sufficient drill and practice the natives sing our gospel hymns with remarkable ease and accuracy. Of course, they cannot play them on their native instruments, but some of their instruments are too crude for the more intelligent natives.<sup>71</sup>

Although the excerpt shows that missionaries did not have a complete understanding of native music - "'Tis true that their melodies are in the minor key and are based on a simpler scale" - they did perceive that native music was closely associated with the spirit world. The sound itself carried meaning, not just the texts. Eventually, it was decided that Mennonite hymns would be translated into native languages, instead of attempting to incorporate Christian words with native melodies.

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<sup>70</sup> Kumedisa, 55-56.

<sup>71</sup> Weaver, 185.

Kumedisá wrote, “Those who became Christians were expected to leave their old way of life and begin a new one, which meant abstaining from any sort of indigenous celebrations such as dancing and other traditional practices.”<sup>72</sup> He does not discuss the problem, stated by the missionaries, that traditional music was closely related to the spiritual realm. He does not explicitly reveal his attitude toward the initial change of African music for Western hymnody, but he does not describe former practice as being wrong. This was the only African perspective on the initial change that was known before the present study, and this became the impetus for the the third area of musical thought: history. This portion asks the question: How do Congolese Mennonites view the drastic change of cultural practice that occurred when the missionaries arrived?

#### Reception and Establishment of Western Music Practice

Only *Thirty-Five Years* includes insight into the reception of hymns by native Congolese and the structure of early music practices, including choirs. It was noted that there was an affinity for singing among the native Congolese. In Mennonite established schools, music was thought to be the favorite subject, because the “natives” enjoyed hours of drills to improve in singing of Western hymns. The schools also established choirs, which have traditionally been an integral part of Mennonite culture. Choirs were thought to be of great importance to bring people into the early Congolese church. No new songs were said to have been written, so the only category, or body of literature, was the hymns brought by missionaries.

Weaver reported, “a choir of boys and girls has been trained to sing in parts and surpasses many choirs at home both as to the quality of voices and the keeping in time.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Kumedisá, 56.

<sup>73</sup> Weaver, 155.

In 1920, a 16-voice choir was formed at a school by selecting advanced students and teachers. This was said to be very successful, so more voices were added until the number reached eighty. It was said that the Congolese easily learned four-part singing. Simple songs were chosen at first, then more complex songs, even those with six vocal parts, were added as the singers progressed. Through the success of this choir, more choirs were added, including a men and boys' chorus and a women's choir. These choirs performed their songs as special features during Sunday morning and evening services.

Missionaries initially offered no insight into their concept of music making in relation to their belief. They did not discuss the purpose for singing hymns. Later, they felt compelled to encourage choirs to "sing to glorify God." One contributor writes, "Since we are doing that [telling them to sing to the glory of God] we have noted marked improvement in our singing."<sup>74</sup> For missionaries, this was seen as a moment of success. This marked a change of concept between music utilized for ritual and music utilized for praise and adoration. The present study addresses current understanding of why music is incorporated into belief — is the primary reason for singing still "to glorify God?"

#### Years Following Initial Change

According *Thirty-Five Years*, singing functioned as a teaching and evangelistic tool. "It shall be an avenue for making Christ and His work of salvation known to those of the villages that cannot easily be reached by the station services."<sup>75</sup> Singing also was present in the culture outside of teaching and evangelism. Western hymns spread to other dimensions of Congolese life outside of the Church, even when not prompted by missionaries. One story tells of a missionary who stumbled upon a mother who was

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 139.

grieving over the death of her child. She cradled the recently deceased child in her arms and sang the Christian hymn, “Trust and Obey.”<sup>76</sup> Another account tells how “natives” would go about singing during their work week, as well as singing together at night around campfires in “perfect harmony.”<sup>77</sup>

*Three Score* offers a different perspective on the years following the establishment of missionary hymns. This account was written through missionary perspective, but was written almost thirty years after *Thirty-Five Years*. The emphasis of the book is on church structure, doctrine, and the difficulty of transferring leadership from missionary control to Congolese control. Loewen briefly mentions why doctrine was not a primary concern for Congolese Mennonites. “The African converts were struggling with their own customs, trying to relate the new religion to their lives.”<sup>78</sup> The struggles were not discussed. An emphasis of the present study is to identify the history of these cultural struggles through Congolese perspective.

### Summary

This review of literature included two types of studies: those that formed the conceptual framework for the study and those that formed conceptions of the society being examined. Literature that formed the conceptual framework for the present study were discussed first. Merriam and Nettl provided the most inspiration; they encompass both the areas of thought and methods represented by this study. Nettl’s model was used for the organization of the study, namely, the division of musical thought into four areas. The other studies represented strengthened aspects of concept, and they provided additional ideas for method. Literature surrounding the Mennonite Church in Congo,

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>78</sup> Loewen, 65.

both past and present, was also discussed. The literature represents insider and outsider perspectives on how the Church was established, including information on cultural practices such as music. The studies provide some insight on both musical sound and musical thought, but leave gaps that will be examined through this study.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify musical thought among members of the Congolese Mennonite Church. Through using Nettl's model of research to examine the music among the Blackfoot Indians, Congolese Mennonite church music will be studied through information from informants of differing station, that is, both music leaders and choir members, and from observations of rehearsals and performances. The scope of musical thought will encompass current classification and function, history of change, concepts of sacred music and music making, and boundaries between sacred and secular.

The organization for this chapter includes a description of the population and sample, data collection, data analysis. These areas are based on Nettl's study, in which he muses,

I cannot claim to have followed any specific method, and the approach would have to be described as eclectic, especially considering that it covered sporadic visits of more than two decades. It was a miscellany of activities that involved observation, conversation, and recording, fairly characteristic of what many ethnomusicologists do.<sup>79</sup>

The methods for the present study were more premeditated, but the approach is similar. He had the benefit of time — the opportunity to conduct his study over decades. I have the benefit of being a quasi-insider and not having to develop trust. My status as member of the Mennonite Church earned my designation as an

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<sup>79</sup> Nettl, 24-25.



insider. I was referred to as “sister” and other members were referred to me as “sister” and “brother.”

### **Population and Sample**

The population and sample choice are influenced by Nettl’s study on Blackfoot Indians. He chose to talk to anyone who was available and interested in music, whether or not they were directly involved with music practice. In the present study, lay persons were not interviewed, but a variety of other informants were consulted, including pastors, elders, choir directors, and choir members. Interviews and observations occurred within twelve congregations and one independent choir, all located in Kinshasa. Opportunity arose as the schedule allowed: rehearsals took place during the week and the services took place on the weekend. Because of this schedule, more rehearsals were attended than services.

I made contact with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) regarding this topic and was connected with MCC workers in Kinshasa. They introduced me to a guide, a man who is the music leader of Paroisse Missionnaire Kitambo (PMK), a Mennonite Brethren congregation in Kinshasa. After explaining the goal of my study, we worked together to create an itinerary that included visiting congregations that represent a broad spectrum of styles within the Mennonite Church in Congo. Through the guide, contact was made to these congregations on my behalf. After answering a few questions about my background and the nature of my work, these congregations graciously accepted my proposal to come and learn about their music practices.

Approval for the study was sought and granted through the University of Northern Colorado’s Institutional Review Board. To gain approval, consent was documented from

a Mennonite Central Committee member in Congo, and within each congregation, permission was granted through church leadership. Those interviewed offered their services as volunteers and were required to be adults over the age of eighteen. To maximize confidentiality, interviews were conducted in semi-private areas, and names used in the study have been changed. IRB-approved consent forms were created in both French and English (See Appendix B), and only those who signed the Consent Form were eligible to participate through interviews.

## **Procedure**

### **Interviews**

During my twenty-eight days in Kinshasa, ensemble rehearsals were visited almost every day during the week. After each rehearsal, volunteers were asked to participate in interviews. Leaders and directors for each group were especially encouraged, but all volunteers over the age of eighteen were included. Depending on the size of the group, the willingness of volunteers, and occasional time constraints, between two and six members were interviewed following each observed rehearsal. All interviews took place at the rehearsal site, which usually meant they took place in a remote corner of the building. Interviews following rehearsals that occurred outdoors required chairs set-up outside of earshot of other people, in order to respect privacy.

To fulfill IRB requirements, participants were presented with consent forms in French. French is the national language and also is the most commonly spoken language throughout the city. It is not spoken by everyone, however, depending on generation and location in the city. Translators were used in most interviews, with the translator asking the informant for his or her preferred language before commencing with the interview.

After determining language, the form was presented with a short verbal statement given regarding the contents of the form. The verbal statement was as follows: “I am conducting a study to learn more about music in the Congolese Mennonite church. If at any point in the process you choose not to participate, or choose to not answer a specific question, you may freely decline. The results will be used in a paper for the completion of my education. One copy of the form will be for you to keep, one will be for me.”

Both researcher and informant signed the forms, then informants were interviewed with open-ended questions, including inquiries pertaining to the four categories of musical thought delineated by the study. The interview questions varied according to the informant’s specialty, such as instrumentalists, ensemble directors, those who were of the *jeunes* age category,<sup>80</sup> and pastors and elders. The vocal group “Ndinga Moyo” provided information on church history and discussed the specific goals of their ensemble. The timeframe for each interview was ten to fifteen minutes, although some took longer, especially those involving pastors and elders. Each interview was recorded.

### Questions

Nettl exemplified the art of determining the appropriate questions to ask, believing that overt questions do not always yield the best results. Some of his questions include, “What makes a song good?”, “What is your favorite song and why?” and “How does your music compare to Western music?” The questions are divided by area, but questions for each area may provide insight into another area. The model does not limit information by area.

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<sup>80</sup> The *jeunes*, or youth category, is comprised of young adults in their early twenties, rather than children, as the word might suggest.

Before attending the first rehearsal and conducting interviews, I received framework and terminology from my guide and translators. For example, I needed to determine if there was a term used other than “missionary hymn,” and what other terms were employed for categories of music. Also sought were terms for surrounding influences, such as titles used for the charismatic, Pentecostal churches. Other preliminary questions included: Is there a separate body of music for children, or do children and adults share the same repertory? What are terms for pieces performed by the congregation or pieces for the choir? Is there a category for solo music?

The interview questions were divided into four categories: classification, history, nature of sacred music, and the boundaries between sacred and profane.<sup>81</sup> These topics were addressed with all interviewees, although some questions were changed or added for those who claimed to be composers, choir directors, instrumentalists, and pastors or elders. Questions addressed to a majority of participants are discussed first, followed by questions designed for specific groups of people.

An objective of the present study was to determine categories of songs or musical styles. Beyond merely naming categories, however, informants were asked to discuss each musical style, including its origin, its purpose, and how it functions in the worship service. The initial directive was simply to “describe” each musical style. This was intentionally left open-ended, following Nettl’s model. He asked open-ended questions, like “tell me about your instruments.”<sup>82</sup> Consequent questions were used only if the informant was tentative and seemed to require more specific prompts.

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<sup>81</sup> See Appendix A for a list of sample interview questions.

<sup>82</sup> Nettl, 86.

A timeline was created from interviews with elders. Although some information was provided through *Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts*, it is incomplete regarding cultural and musical information, and does not cover the past decade. A goal of this study was not only to provide history, but to examine the history of music in the church from the Congolese perspective, even the perspective of those not in music leadership. This was also Nettl's approach to the Blackfoot Indians: he sought their insider perspective, not just what he had learned from ethnomusicological attempts. Views were sought concerning the early years of the Congolese Mennonite Church and how music has developed in the church over the last century. Each informant was asked how long they had been attending Mennonite Churches, and if they had witnessed any change in music during that time. If they answered "yes" to the second question, they were asked to describe the changes they had seen. Opinion on why these changes had occurred was also sought.

Also, questions were asked with the intention of illuminating concepts of the sacred musical experience. These include: Why do you participate in music? Why is music important for Christians? What makes music in a service better or worse than another service? What is your favorite song and why? The primary questions are the first two; the latter options were provided as informants needed guiding topics. The question of "why" was heavily influenced by Seeger's study on Suyá society, and evoked conversation on the nature of sacred music through examining purpose.

Questions surrounding boundaries between the sacred and profane were addressed, but through comparison with other music cultures in Congo. The purpose was to discover if any style of music, instrument, or posture, such as becoming slain in the

Spirit, was forbidden in the church. An additional purpose was to determine how clear the boundaries were drawn, and if there were consequences for not respecting these boundaries. Not wishing to be offensive or overt, Nettl's comparative technique was used, and questions were asked such as: How does the music you sing in church compare to secular music in Congo? How does it compare to the Catholic Church or to revivalist churches?

Additional questions were added for those with special titles or skills. For example, composers were asked to explain their compositional process, as well their educational background in music. Instrumentalists were also asked about their learning process, as well as if they ever participate in or play music that is non-Christian. Ensemble directors were questioned regarding the responsibilities of their positions. Also addressed were the most difficult and most satisfying aspects of their jobs as leaders. With elders, history was the primary point of discussion, both in determining exact years of change in order to create a timeline, and also to illuminate the points of debate at each change.

### Observations

In addition to interviews, observations took place during Sunday morning worship services, a revival service, and ensemble rehearsals. Ensemble rehearsals are less formal, providing the opportunity to participate and gain background information on each song. Before each piece, the leader was asked about the composer of the song, the language used, and the meaning of the song. For each ensemble, I asked about the arrangement of voicing, determining ratios of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. Additionally, the teaching of songs and the rehearsal process were observed, a method Haefer used to determine

musical thought among Papago Indians, making the assumption that much can be revealed that is not spoken about in both formal and informal conversation.

During worship services, I was given opportunity to participate through singing, swaying, and playing shakers. Participation is also valuable, even if not used as extensively as Paul Berliner when he learned the *mbira* and Ruth Stone when she lived among the Kpelle Indians. During services, no opportunity was provided for asking questions, so cues in leadership, congregational participation, and posture were noted. Instrumentation and styles of music were observed and recorded. Elements of the service in which music was used and the overall length of time allotted for music in the service were also noted.

### **Data Analysis**

Interviews and observations were transcribed and the data were separated into separate documents with various categories. For example, all comments related to Mennonite identity were gathered into a single document and all comments regarding Church music compared to secular music were compiled. For each document, the most common to least common responses were listed.

The categories for questions as stated in this chapter served as a beginning point, but the results and statements did not neatly stay in one domain, especially concerning philosophies of music and boundaries of the sacred and secular. Gathered data on these topics were produced from all of the categories of questions: classification, history, nature of sacred music, and boundaries of sacred and secular.

This method of examining data was influenced by Nettl, as were other elements of the study. He identified themes through his conversations and his observations, but had

to reconcile some conversations and pieces of data that seemed contradictory. Four areas that guided his conclusions about musical thought included: (1) There are certain things on which all people agree. (2) Principle may be agreed upon, even though contrary information may be given. For example, there may be dispute over who wrote a particular song, but all agree in the principle of the ability for people to write their own songs. (3) Certain people have authority over others. Participants would yield to higher ranking informants if they were told their information was not correct. (4) There is a degree to which principles are taken seriously.<sup>83</sup>

Nettl argues that culture cannot be defined through homogeneity, because members of the same culture may have a different set of knowledge concerning various subjects. Two people who are culturally linked may both know the music of Madonna, for instance, but only one may know the music of John Cage. This does not separate them culturally. There is adequate room for dissimilarity among cultural practice and knowledge. This can be acknowledged without fearing contradiction; principles and themes can still be confidently identified as representing culture.

### **Summary**

The population chosen for this study was determined through collaborative efforts with a guide. Participating congregations include churches in the capital city of Kinshasa, DR Congo, that represent the widest range of music practice. Interviews were conducted with a variety of volunteer informants, including elders, pastors, choir directors, and choir members, and the questions asked were for the purpose of starting conversation regarding the four areas of musical thought addressed by this study.

Rehearsals and worship services were observed, with rehearsals visited more often. In

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<sup>83</sup> Nettl, 30.



rehearsal, observations were made regarding elements such as posture and techniques for learning songs. The data were analyzed and common themes were determined, recognizing the potential limits to this approach as identified by Nettl.

## CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to identify musical thought among members of the Congolese Mennonite Church by using Nettl's research model for examining musical practice and concept among Blackfoot Indians. The Congolese Mennonite church music was studied through interviews with informants and observations of rehearsals and performances. Borrowing Nettl's method of organization, the scope of musical thought encompasses current classification and function, history of change, concepts of sacred music and music making, and boundaries between sacred and secular.

This chapter is organized by the following categories: presentation of descriptive characteristics of respondents, in which the number and description of informants is given and participating congregations and ensembles are described; and organization of data, which includes rationale for a four-part division. This is followed by the four areas that encompass the scope of musical thought as described by this study.

### **Presentation of Descriptive Characteristics of Respondents**

The selection process for participating churches was based on the desire to observe congregations at varying points along the spectrum of music practices in Mennonite Churches in Kinshasa. Some are more traditional, looking back to the era of missionaries, while others model Sunday services after charismatic churches in the city.

Twelve churches were visited during my twenty-eight day stay in Congo. Choir rehearsals were observed almost every weeknight, while worship services occurred only on weekends, resulting in more rehearsals observed than services. In three of the twelve congregations, both worship services and rehearsals were observed. In two churches, I witnessed only worship services, and in the remaining seven, only rehearsals were observed. Additionally, an ensemble called “Nginda Moyo,” which is an independent choral society formed for the preservation of missionary hymns, was consulted. In churches, I observed various ensembles, including young adult choirs, which are comprised of men and women approximately in their twenties, men’s and women’s choirs, mixed ensembles for singers of all ages, girls’ choirs, and *adoration* groups, which are most commonly comprised of singers accompanied by electronic instruments.

Congregation size ranged from 100 to 200 people and each church was home to multiple ensembles. One pastor informed me of the advantages of having many choirs: good choirs bring people into the church. Another pastor said that people come to church in order to hear music, not the sermon. This was not problematic for him, however. The music produced by a church is crucial, and many believe that the survival and vitality of their congregation depends on musical practice.

The data are from formal interviews and observations, as well as other conversations and cultural observations. The final interview sample size was fifty men and women; consisting of thirty-one men and nineteen women. Sixteen informants were involved in *jeunes*, or youth ensembles, placing them in an age bracket ranging from late teens to mid-twenties. Six interviewees were instrumentalists, including those who play keyboards, drum-set, and guitar, and nine identified themselves as composers.

### **Organization of Data Analysis**

Of the studies represented in the review of literature, Haefer, Berliner, and Seeger regularly discussed sound before concept and Merriam and Stone chose to discuss concept before sound. Nettl did the most to fuse the two ideas by discussing four areas of musical thought that included sound properties. I attempted to reconcile this difference by first discussing the area of categories of music and how they function. It is hoped that through first determining categories, a basic terminology and understanding of musical styles will be established, and that, in turn, will aid understanding of history, the nature of music, and boundaries surrounding music. The results follow the four ideas encompassed in the idea of musical thought: classification and function, history, nature of sacred music, and boundaries of sacred and secular.

#### **Area 1: Classification and Function**

The data for this section were collected predominantly through observation. My guide and translators provided information regarding terminology used to classify different types of sound. Function was determined both through observation and interview. All current classifications, or styles for song, were observed in the context of worship services. Songs were used throughout worship services, and each style of song was commonly used in more than one portion of the event. The components and order of service are from the original model presented by missionaries, and typically consist of an extended time of prayer, congregational singing, a time for the presentation of solo and ensemble music, preaching of the sermon, offertory, communion, and ceremonial events including youth commissioning and baby dedications. Except for the sermon, music is incorporated in all of these components. Four styles of music were identified: newly

animated *cantiques*, choir music, *musique de louange*, and *musique d'adoration*. Each style has a purpose, or a function that contributes to the entirety of the service.

### Newly Animated *Cantiques*

*Cantiques*, or animated *cantiques*, originated from the translated hymns that were introduced by Western missionaries. The term *cantique* is the French word for “song,” and refers not only to individual songs, but the books in which these songs are collected. Music notation is not included; only the text is provided, but for most congregants the texts are well known and the books are not referenced. *Cantiques* are largely used for congregational singing, but were also observed during prayer time, solo singing, communion, and ceremonial events.

*Cantiques* that are currently used in the service have been altered, or “animated.” Traditional drums are commonly used, as well as shakers that have been distributed among members of the congregation. Congregants and leaders also insert ululations and vocal exclamations of “alleluia” at cadence points. Changes can also occur in other ways, such as altered rhythms and harmonies, as well as changed notes in the melodic line. Some songs have been altered more drastically than others, and the manner in which they are altered may vary from congregation to congregation.

The song, “Nearer My God to Thee,” was not drastically changed. It is notated in *Bankunga Ya Kintwadi*, which is the first published book of translated hymns, as 4/4. During an observation of this song during a rehearsal, the duple meter was replaced by a triple meter. Traditional drum was added to accent the meter and provide a clear, steady beat. This was the main change; the vocal lines and harmonies were similar to the version that was represented in *Bankunga Ya Kintwadi*.

One of the most dramatic alterations was observed in the song “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.” The first two lines of the original notation (Ex. 1) were borrowed from the Mennonite hymnbook and translated into a form of Kikongo. Original singing was characterized by homophonic texture, and was non-improvisatory.

48      **Nduku Beto 'Kele Yesu**  
*What a Friend*  
 JOSEPH SCRIVEN.—A. FLAMMANN.      C. C. CONVERSE.

1. Ndu-ku beto 'kele Yesu, Na-ta-ka m-bi beto.  
 2. Bu mpele ye mpukumanu, Ku-si-mba beto bubu.  
 3. Kana beto 'kele ntantu, Ki-zi-tu 'kele nene,

Mambu ya kiese i-ke-le, Kana beto kulomba,  
 Zulu-mba ya sambu na yau, Kaka kulomba Nzambi.  
 Beto munga yo kwa Yesu, Yandi sadisa beto.

### Example 1

In its animated version, this *cantique* is often sung in a modified call and response form, primarily for the purpose of setting the pitch. One such version was observed at a women's prayer meeting (Ex. 2) and was accompanied only by a ratchet. In the version observed, the leader stayed on the melody, the chorus responded and then joined the melody, and various solo voices provided links between phrases.

The image displays a musical score for a three-part setting of "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." The score is written in F major (one flat) and 4/4 time. It consists of two systems of three staves each. The first system is labeled "Solo Voices," "Leader," and "Chorus." The second system is labeled with a measure rest "5" above the first staff, indicating a continuation of the solo part. The Solo Voices part begins with a whole rest for the first four measures, then enters in the fifth measure with a descending eighth-note melody. The Leader part begins in the first measure with a half note, followed by a quarter note, and then a half note. The Chorus part begins with a whole rest for the first four measures, then enters in the fifth measure with a descending eighth-note melody. The score is written in a simple, clear style with no lyrics.

### Example 2

Although shown in the key of F for the ease of representation, the key sung for this sample was a 6th lower, in the key of A-flat. As with the other styles of music, pitch is typically determined by the lead singer, and may vary between performances. The text is not included in the example because it has changed from the original version.

A second observation of “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” was heard by a *jeunes* group with a more modern style. Using guitar accompaniment, a male voice was the “call” and a group of three females was the “response.” The lead singer altered a few notes in the melody and added a slight amount of ornamentation, however, saying that he did so to make the song “lovely.”

The purpose for continued use of *cantiques* is most commonly reported to be teaching and evangelizing, a concept passed down from their initial use in the Church. For missionaries, an original function of these songs was to provide a medium for

evangelization, as many people came into the church to hear music. *Cantiques* are still thought of in this way. An elder reported, “When the missionaries arrived for the first time, they used those songs in evangelization work, trying to win people to Christ.”

Regardless of how they sound, they are believed by some to have the power to convert outsiders to Christianity. A motivation for their continued use lies in this principle. The elder stressed the urgency of the situation, “We have to continue the work of evangelization, otherwise we will lose it.”

### Choral Style

A second category for church music is choral music. Defining the style is difficult, because most choirs take pride in developing a distinct *melodie*, or overall sound. Choirs form very cohesive groups: they sway together, dress alike, and gather together for rehearsal two or three times a week. As many people remain in the same congregation for the duration of their lives, some choral singers have been performing together since their early childhood days.

Choir songs are the first example of music composed by Congolese Mennonites, and choirs continue to maintain an important position in the church. Members of the choir are representatives of the church, and are typically thought of as secondary preachers. The primary function of choir music is instruction; the congregation’s role is to listen and not participate. Song topics often come from Bible stories or inspiration from other parts of scripture, especially the book of Revelation. Moral issues such as domestic violence and adultery may also be addressed.

Choir music is typically unaccompanied, or accompanied only by traditional drums or other hand percussion. Although membership can be as few as four or five



singers, most choirs have between fifteen and twenty singers. Each choir, including ensembles for men and women, categorizes singers by soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. Voice designation is determined by the function of the line, that is, melody, lower harmony, higher harmony, and bass, rather than register or the gender of the singer.

For example, in men's choirs, the sopranos sing the melody, the altos sing a lower harmonic line, the tenors sing a higher harmonic line, and the basses sing the bass line. In mixed gender choirs, sopranos may be male or female; the octave in which they sing is not important. Other sections in mixed choirs can vary according to the preference of the director, which is another method of creating a distinct sound. Some directors prefer to have only men on alto or only women on tenor. I was informed by a group of males that only men can sing bass, which was observed without exception. However, I was proudly informed by one female singer that she could sing soprano, alto, tenor, *and* bass.

Songs are either written by the director, a member in the choir, or borrowed from another church. Most commonly, a director is first inspired with a melody or portion of a melody. Then, he offers it to the group, and the group will work to arrange it as an ensemble. This was the practice of the men's chorus in an area called Batela. Before each song, I inquired about the composer of the song, desiring to know who provided the initial portion of the song. The answer received was the same every time, and each time it was given with increased impatience until I understood the answer: "We all wrote it!" Once arranged, these songs were attributed to everyone.

New songs are learned aurally; I observed the use of paper and written words at only two churches. Songs are lined-out, or learned one phrase at a time, usually

beginning with the sopranos. The director sings the soprano line and the sopranos repeat it back until they can sing it without mistake. The process is repeated for the altos, tenors, and basses. Songs are learned phrase-by-phrase in this manner. When asked about the most difficult aspect of his job, one director lamented, “it takes a long time to learn a new song.”

For rehearsal and performance, choirs stand in a semi-circle, with the director in the middle. For rehearsal, the director listens to each singer as he walks around the group and helps the singers who are struggling to sing their part. The director knows each line well, as he is usually the one who either arranged the harmony or contributed to its arrangement. He is able to sing with the person to help the choir member learn his or her part. All singers are expected to know the songs well and are assisted by the director until no mistakes are made.

These practices of composing and learning are universal in the groups observed, indicating that groups are aware of practices by outside ensembles. Although there is communication and interaction among the choirs, especially through periodically planned choral festivals, each group is known for having their own *melodie*. *Melodies* can be borrowed by other ensembles, especially if one choir is charged to train a new choir. At two of the churches, there were ensembles that used the same *melodie*, or as described to me, one choir “borrowed” the *melodie* of another choir.

*Melodies* evolve through time, as new songs are arranged according to the director’s preference and the skill of the ensemble. The act of drumming provides illustration of this occurrence. Drummers initially learn the craft from an elder drummer,

but they eventually develop their own styles and become identified by their individual beat patterns. Similarly, choirs develop their own sound characteristics.

Distinct sounds are created through timbre, including voices and instruments. Most mixed ensembles have male-dominated soprano sections, but some directors prefer the sound of a female dominated soprano section. A church choir in a part of Kinshasa called Elikia often featured the bass section, but the director of the choir of another area of the city, Peniel, chose not to use basses in his choir because he accompanied the songs on guitar, and stated that the bass voice was not necessary. Most choirs do not use guitar or synthesizer; if instruments are used, indigenous drums or hand percussion are preferred.

### *Musique de louange*

Another church style is *musique de louange*, or praise music. *Louange* songs are congregational, and are characterized by quick tempi, drumming and dancing. Usually two or three traditional drummers are involved, as well as other players who strike the sides of the drums with a stick. *Louange* is most used commonly during the offertory, while members of the congregation dance down the aisle and place their offerings in designated baskets. Sometimes, the songs contain messages to be enacted, such as traveling to a better home. In one example of *louange*, members carried purses and other belongings on their heads, to symbolize moving to a heavenly land.

The song “Yesu Azali Awa” is a popular example of *louange*, but one not typically used during offertory. It is a song common to all Protestant churches in Congo, and is heard at the beginning of many prayer meetings, rehearsals, and worship services. The text is simple and repetitive, a characteristic of *louange*.

Yesu azali awa (x3) na biso (repeat)  
*Jesus is here with us*

Alleluya, Alleya, na Yesu (repeat)  
*Praise to the Lord*

*Louange* was the category least discussed among informants. I was not even aware of its existence until after the interview process had begun. Unlike some of the other categories, *louange* is not a source of controversy if used in moderation. It also is the least utilized style of music making, occurring consistently only at offertory and occasionally at the opening and closing of the service.

#### *Musique d'adoration*

*Musique d'adoration*, or worship music, is a style that has been imported into the Mennonite church from more charismatic churches, particularly the revivalists churches in Kinshasa. Mennonite songwriters write songs in the style of *adoration* music, but many songs are learned through other media, such as popular selling music videos and Christian radio stations. Although a new style, it has been widely accepted by members from all generations in the Mennonite church.

The purpose of *adoration* music during the worship service is to bring people nearer to God, often termed as bringing people into the “presence” of God. Once in the presence of God, people can more effectively pray to Him. It is described as an emotionally deep experience, often bringing people to tears as they tell God their problems. Others report being physically healed through this music, and many describe it as “comforting.”

In the worship service, *adoration* music is integrated with the extended time of prayer. Congregational participation is expected, and it is led by the officiant, or the

person who orders the program of events for a particular Sunday. The officiant will call out a topic for prayer, such as forgiveness for sin, praying for health needs, praying for the church, and praying for the country. Everyone then prays out loud simultaneously. One man stated “it is good to hear what the person next to you is praying, so you can know what is on his heart.” When the prayer is finished, an adoration song is sung. The pattern repeats as the officiant changes to the next topic, or item for prayer.

Another time this music is used in the service is during the segment reserved for solo and ensemble singing. Similar in structure to choirs, *adoration* groups have formed in churches. These ensembles are a relatively recent development, occurring only in the last decade. They rehearse once or twice a week, but typically include fewer people than the number of members observed in choirs. Also, they are comprised of younger musicians; no adults beyond the *juenes* age group were observed participating in these ensembles. However, members of the older generation do participate in this type of music because it is used during the extended time of prayer, which includes congregational participation.

The ideal instrumentation for most groups is electric keyboard, guitar, drum set, and singers on microphones. Only one church observed used drum set. Most used drum patches available through their synthesizers, instead. Not all congregations possess funds to acquire instruments, but *adoration* groups are formed regardless, performing the style either unaccompanied or with indigenous drums. Most Churches had initiatives in place to raise money for purchasing electronic instruments.

Even though *adoration* music uses pitched instruments while other styles commonly do not, it remains customary for the pitch to be set by the vocalists, and not

the instrumentalists. Commonly, the leader of the ensemble is in charge of establishing pitch for each song, even if the leader is a vocalist. Those playing pitched instruments must match the pitch of the vocalists through trial and error. Depending on skill, a few verses may pass before the correct key center is determined.

*Adoration* music is the style of music most closely resembling music from outside the church. One singer described it as “R&B,” which is a popular music genre that has been imported into Africa from the United States, though it is commonly marketed as “RNB.” The tempo is slow and kept constant by various drum patches on the electronic keyboards. The voicing differs from choral and *cantique* singing because the bass voice is not a significant, driving force. One young director chooses not to have anyone singing bass because he said that those parts were covered by the instruments. Harmony is still important, however. Unison singing rarely occurs; harmonies both below and above the melodic line are common. In addition, extended vocal solo passages were heard more often, as well as breaks in the singing when just the instruments play.

## **Area 2: History**

A timeline was constructed from conversations with church leaders, elders, and other informants. More than an effort to collect dates, surrounding issues behind drastic changes were sought, including perceptions on traditional African music and the initial change from African music to missionary music in 1911.

### **Pre-Mission Era**

To learn more about views on the initial introduction of missionary culture, I asked, “What did the music in Congo sound like before the missionaries came?” The response to this question was often laden with looks of confusion. Many said they were

not sure and one singer even admitted, “to tell you the truth, I have no idea!” I quickly discovered that this question seemed a little absurd to those I interviewed. One young woman said, “When I was born, I found Mennonite hymns and Mennonite books with songs. In the past, I wasn’t there, so it is difficult for me to say something.”

Also, some informed me that there was no model before the arrival of missionaries. “Just the missionaries brought us songs. We didn’t know about church or songs before they came here.” For many, especially those in the younger generation, there is not a strong connection with the African traditions in the pre-missions era.

Some of the elders and pastors had a different perspective, however. One pastor explained to me that each region in Congo had its own style of traditional music and used instruments that were specific to that region. Another elder offered, “Before the evangelists came, we had our way of doing things that was only for us. Our song was in our mother tongue.” Indeed, the equation of traditional music and “mother tongue” was used by others. The same elder also said, “Before the missionaries came we knew that God existed. But when the missionaries came we stopped with our culture and they brought theirs.”

#### Introduction of Missionary Music and the Mission Era

This exchange of culture was not only implemented for worship services; African music was to be abandoned outside of church life as well. A pastor named Phillip said that he understood why the missionaries made this decision.

The missionaries didn’t understand the music. There was some music for mourning, some music for births and some music for deaths. There was also music by sorcerers and healers. The missionaries didn’t know the difference, so they taught their own songs, and forbade them to sing any of their songs.

I pressed further, asking if Congolese now have resentment towards the action of the missionaries. He responded, “no.” I asked if there was ever a time when this was a point of contention in the Church. He responded, “maybe for a time in the nineties.”

An elder also defended the actions of the missionaries, suggesting that introducing an outside culture was necessary at the time, but that with the passing of generations, music practices inevitably had to shift.

It was good at the time, but with evolution things are changing and we also have to change. It’s like with young children. If you are feeding him with milk, later he will ask you for more strong food.

The reference to milk and strong food is from the Bible<sup>84</sup> and refers to the idea that new Christians need to learn elementary truths before receiving deeper teaching. For this elder, being only allowed to use missionary hymns was “milk” and the freedom to determine their own system of music was “strong food.”

One hundred years after the first Mennonite Church was established, there is scant evidence of resentment regarding the initial change from African music and culture to Western practices. If it did exist in the 1990s, as Phillip stated, it has either faded or was not expressed to me. In general, there is an appreciation for missionaries, because they are the ones that brought the gospel to Congo. I observed this sentiment most strongly in the vocal group Ndinga Moyo, an independent choir that is comprised of singers from many different congregations. It was created for the purpose of preserving the songs brought by missionaries.

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<sup>84</sup> The passage referenced is: “I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, because you were not yet ready for it.” 1 Cor. 3:2 NIV



Ndinga Moyo, which translates to “the voice of salvation,” strives to promote the “precious heritage” of *cantiques* to the next generation. The founder of the choir gave this statement:

We have received a very good heritage from missionaries, and we don’t want to keep it in our drawers. We want to share it with our children, so that they can also take it to future generations. And by doing so we will be of great help in responding to Christ’s great commission, ‘Go into all the world and make disciples.’ Our way of doing that is through these songs.

They maintain the view that Mennonite missionaries used their hymns as a tool in evangelization, so the same hymns may still be used to spread the message to those who are still “in the world.”

#### Congolese Independence and Change

The 1960s were a decade of great change in Congo, mainly due to the nation having required independence from Belgium on June 30, 1960. Seeking improved economic conditions, many people migrated from the country to the cities, especially to the capital city of Kinshasa. This was a time of chaos, as people sought to find others who spoke their native language. Although French is the official national language, it is not spoken by everyone, and it not the first language of many Congolese, especially those in older generations. Of the churches I visited, only one held services entirely in French. One of the congregations regularly uses a translator for Sunday morning sermons, so both French and Lingala could be represented. The songs observed were in many languages, including Chokwe, Lingala, Kikongo, Tshiluba, French, Swahili, and even English.

As Mennonites found other Mennonites who spoke the same language, they formed prayer groups, which eventually led to small congregations. By the late 1960s, Mennonite churches were formed in Kinshasa. When Congo was colonized, the

government split the country into regions by denomination, resulting in a Catholic area of the country, a Baptist portion of the country, a Mennonite part of the country, and so on. Because of their location, Mennonites were late to enter into the church and music scene in Kinshasa. Other churches were already well-established, and influenced the Mennonite Church, even though the Mennonites effected little cultural and musical change in return. The Mennonites absorbed practices without teaching others their practices. It was from this occurrence that the first musical changes appeared in the Mennonite Church.

The first change was the addition of indigenous instruments such as drums and shakers to the singing of *cantiques*. When missionaries vacated the country during the 1960s, Mennonites observed that other Christians used drums in services and determined that there was nothing inappropriate with using these instruments. The old associations with animism had lessened, or even had become extinct. Drums and shakers were no longer thought to be tools for witch doctors and sorcerers.

With the introduction of local drums and shakers, the singing of *cantiques* was said to have become “animated” through the “work of the Holy Spirit.” The mandate of singing the songs as the missionaries had instructed no longer seemed as relevant. Extra phrases and exclamations were added as they were encouraged or given by the Holy Spirit. Harmony, melody, form, and meter were also subject to change.

These changes were resisted by some, especially pastors who had been trained by missionaries from an early age. After the missionaries left Congo in the 1960s, many Mennonite pastors firmly kept the traditions that were taught to them. Pastors and elders were asked if there was debate in the church during this era. Most said that they

remembered debate, although one pastor said, “No, not really. As Africans, it is important the way we feel the music.” The general opinion, however, was best articulated by another pastor.

Yes, because we have two categories of creation. The first, we can call them conservatives, the elders, they were taught by missionaries. They said no drums; we cannot use it. The younger people said, no, no, it is written in the Bible, to celebrate with drums and so forth. So now we have to use it. After discussion, some young men and ladies brought drums.

According to him, there are still villages in the countryside that say you cannot use drums, but he also attributed this to lack of funds with which to purchase them.

An era of “inspiration” and songwriting began in the mid-1970s. Congolese Mennonites, inspired by the Holy Spirit, added to their canon of newly animated *cantiques* by creating their own church songs. New songs were written by choir directors and were usually introduced through choir performance. During this period, the concept of *melodie* and the autonomy of each choir’s *melodie* started to form.

Other choir practices changed, as well. The missionaries taught the choirs to stand in four rows, one for each section. These rows were jokingly referred to as “streets,” as in “soprano street” and “tenor street.” The formation eventually changed to a semi-circle with the director free to move throughout the middle.

One choir demonstrated the disadvantages of using rows. The director arranged his singers in four rows and discussed the large distance between him and the singers in the back row, complaining that he could not hear them. If they cannot be heard, he cannot know if they are struggling with their part in order to correct them. Another concern was height. While standing in “streets” not everyone can see the director well,

because the tallest members may be standing in the front row. Also demonstrated was the awkwardness of using four rows when only four singers are present.

In sum, this period of change is still viewed as the old, quiet style. Even though the terms “animation” and “inspiration” were used to describe these movements, music from these decades is still described as “slow and very calm,” or “cool with no big movements.” The greater change was yet to come.

### The Great Change

Revivalist churches, a product of an independent, charismatic movement, became a presence in Congo in the 1980s. The effect on Protestant Churches, especially those in Kinshasa, was profound. The revival churches claimed to possess a “movement of the Spirit” that the Catholic and Protestant churches lacked. One pastor said that because of this, “we had to adapt.” This influence did not appear in the Mennonite church in Kinshasa until around the turn of the century, however. Mennonite churches in the city slowly and cautiously adapted elements from revivalist churches, especially the use of instruments and *adoration* style.

A chief catalyst of this change was the addition of electronic instruments. Just as the addition of drums ushered in a season of change in the 1960s, the addition of instruments that started in the late 1990s created new sounds and new possibilities. It also created new categories for church music ensembles. For example, according to my itinerary, I was scheduled to attend an instrumental ensemble rehearsal. As I had not yet seen an ensemble with only instruments, I was highly curious. I expected to find a room with indigenous drums, shakers, and perhaps a keyboard. However, the instrumental group was primarily comprised of vocalists. There were four singers on microphones

who were accompanied by an electric keyboard and drum set. This was termed an instrumental ensemble because instruments were accompanying the voices. No occurrences of instruments used without voices were witnessed.

The concept of instrumental music also led to confusion when informants were questioned regarding the use of instruments. When inquiring after the history of instruments in the church, many said that there were no instruments in the past. I used the term “instruments” when referring to indigenous drums and shakers, which is not typically how the term is applied. Some said that there were no instruments, only drums, or that there were no instruments, only the maracas. One guitarist did make the distinction between local instruments, and instruments from Europe, thinking of them all as instruments, but with a different origin. In general, when instruments were discussed, it was in reference to electronic instruments, drum-sets, and guitars, rather than indigenous drums.

Of the twelve churches visited, only four used electronic instruments. One man predicted that all churches will eventually have instruments. The reason why many churches do not have instruments is not based on philosophy, although grumblings about music being too loud were overheard. Many of the churches do not possess instruments because they are still in the process of raising money to purchase them.

Another influence from the revival church is the incorporation of dancing into church services. As one man put it, “The revivalists knew that Congolese like to dance.” No one with whom I spoke reported that dance was forbidden, but the topic of when and how much to dance is a point of debate. There is a general consensus that it is acceptable

during the singing of *louange*, but many Mennonites believe it should be regulated or avoided during other elements of the service.

After a century of existence, *cantiques* are used, but with decreasing frequency. This provides time in the service for the three other types of song. In general, these changes are accepted and enjoyed, although they were initially met with some trepidation. One woman said, “now we have it all.”

### **Area 3: Concepts of Music and Religion**

#### **Communal Participation**

In discussions of music making, the appropriateness of the *act* of making music was never a point of discourse. Music is fundamental to the religious experience, and its incorporation into the worship service is not viewed with suspicion as it is in some religions. From young worshippers to the elderly, music has a broad appeal. Many informants stated that they have been singing from birth; indeed, I witnessed choir rehearsals with women who held babies as they sang and rehearsed. A children’s Sunday School class in one of the congregations observed spent the entire time singing collectively, as well as singing solos for one another. The teacher patiently taught them “Battle Hymn of the Republic” as they shook their shakers. Choirs exist for young girls and young men, as well as for older women. There are choirs comprised of men of all ages.

Congregational participation was wide and vigorous. Rows of congregants would clap and sway together and small percussion instruments, especially shakers, were distributed throughout church buildings. Many of the shakers were homemade, using materials such as empty bottles of perfume and plastic beverage bottles. Instruments

employed in the service were not used by musicians who lead the congregation from the front of the room. Even when a soloist or small group is singing, suggesting a more performative and less communal setting, congregations show their appreciation through shouts of “amen,” ululations, and the giving of an offertory. If a member of the congregation is enjoying a performance by an individual or group, he or she can give money that will be used to raise funds for the choir, or other music needs in the church such as purchasing more copies of *cantiques* or electronic instruments. In general, the atmosphere for music making fosters support for everyone involved, and is largely free of competition.

From observation it was determined that shame or embarrassment when performances goes poorly is outside the cultural norm. Visible shame was witnessed only once, during a women’s choir rehearsal at the church that relied most heavily on packets of paper for remembering songs. The women started singing a song, realized they did not know the song well, and started to falter. They stopped singing, and, with embarrassment, asked me to delete the song from my recorder. Other than this incident, when musical mistakes occurred, the posture of those performing did not change. For example, as a vocally predominate tradition, difficulties are created for instrumentalists trying to match the key set by the lead vocalist. At times, as the instrumentalists are loudly trying different keys, the singers would be halfway-through the song before the correct key was determined by the guitar or keyboard player. Other times the pitch would fall in-between the keys, and the singers and instrumentalists would never match pitch. The practice of letting vocalists establish pitch does not seem to be changing,

however, and fumbling to match the key in front of other congregants is not viewed as unusual and does not bring visible shame.

### For the Glory of God

It is taught by church leaders and strongly believed by church members that singing should be performed for the glory of God, and not the praise of man or the world. This was emphasized without hesitation by each group interviewed, whether more contemporary or more traditional. The theological stance is that the very purpose for human existence is to praise, worship, and glorify God. It is believed that song is the most effective way for this to be accomplished. An informant explained, “this is why songs are more important than most other things.” Music is tied not only to their reason for being created, but is also a link to eternal life. More than one informant stated that singing is the only earthly thing that will carry over into eternity.

Some informants had lighter responses, saying they simply *enjoyed* singing for God’s glory, while others viewed it more as a command, quoting the Scripture, “all that breathes must glorify God.” Another said, “It’s very important because He is God almighty so we *have to* lean down in front of Him.” Either way, it is viewed that the act of singing is not for singing’s sake. One choir member said, “I am not singing because I’m a singer or musician. I’m just singing for the glory of God.” The purpose behind singing is more important than personal enjoyment or the creation of an identity or profession through being a musician.

### Opening Avenues of Communication

One informant stated, “The Bible says it [singing] is another way to pray.” Generally, singing is equated with prayer. With the integration of *adoration* music in



recent years, this association has strengthened. The purpose of *adoration* music is to “send” people to a state of prayer, by leading them to the presence of God. However, this is applied not only to *adoration* songs, but to all Christian music. The *cantiques* can also function in leading congregations to God’s presence. An older informant offered, “we used to pray using just the *cantiques*.”

Through being sent into the presence of God, a member of the congregation who was previously distracted or “absent-minded” could now pray. Being in a state of prayer, the person can tell God all of his problems and express thanks for all that God has done in his life. Some members even report being healed from sickness in this elevated state of prayer. The informant who stated that he simply enjoyed being in the presence of God did not offer what he said while talking to God.

Another avenue of communication is between singers and other people, including both members of the congregation and those who are “unevangelized.” This is mainly accomplished through choral music and *cantiques*. By preaching to others and offering them comfort, God is served, as well as men. One pastor provided this statement:

I like to sing. When I was young, it was a way of my living. There was something inside of me that liked to sing, and this thing gave me words sometimes. The thing told me ‘why not sing for the grace of the Lord?’ You can make it a sound for the love of God; for the child in the road; the love of God for those in prison. You need to sing to encourage those who are suffering. Tell them that I am Lord, and one day, I’m going to touch them. That’s why I need everywhere, every time to sing for the Lord.

Other informants also discussed serving God and man as a main purpose of Christian music and singing.

## **Area 4: Boundaries Between Sacred and Profane**

### Defining Mennonite Song

Mennonites see their song as in direct opposition with the secular world. One man told me that his favorite song was “On my Shoulders.” I asked what it was about, and he told me that the central characters are two people that God created; the first prefers to have the world on his shoulders and the second prefers to carry the cross of Christ on his shoulders. This is representative of Congolese Mennonite thought. There are sharp distinctions between Christians and those who are of the world. No middle position is available.

### **Inspiration**

The lack of middle position is manifested through musical practice. In the realm of music, songs are either inspired or not inspired, meaning that they are either given to man through the Holy Spirit or they are not. Secular music is not considered to be inspired, and some conservative Mennonites do not consider the songs from the charismatic revival churches to be inspired. Conversely, Mennonites consider *cantiques* to be inspired, while some members of the revivalist movements claim that these songs were not given by the Holy Spirit.

I learned most about the concept of inspiration from conversations with composers centering on the process for writing songs. The language used for the creation of an inspired song is that of “receiving” a song from the Holy Spirit. Composers are usually those who also direct choirs, but other choir members and members of the congregation may receive songs, as well. Although some writers do have formal training, composing songs is seen as a gift, and is not a product of experience or education. One

director offered, “I studied music first in school. And God has given me a gift of singing and praising Him through song. Some songs come to me in dreams.” Another director has a lifetime of choir experiences in addition to his formal study of music at the university. A friend of his said to me, “It is why God uses him in that way.”

Education is not necessary, however. One composer stated, “I haven’t studied music with notes, this is only my everyday experience.” Another said that he hadn’t studied music at the university, but it is “a gift I have received from God.” Samuel, a young composer who had methodical ideas regarding the creation of his ensemble’s *melodie*, had no formal music education. He also plays guitar and instructs other instrumentalists. He attributes his song writing, and even his ability to play instruments, to a gift from God.

No, I didn’t study music in school. I think that music for me is a gift from God. One night I had an inspiration. And in the morning I wrote for the guitar. They didn’t teach me, they didn’t show me how to play the guitar. I learned only from God. I think at this time, if I have money, I will go to the high seminary of music. I will study music.

There seemed to be no hierarchy between composers who had studied formally and those who had not been given the opportunity. As with Samuel, the desire to study at the university was acknowledged by non-formally trained musicians.

Once a song or a portion of a song is received from the Holy Spirit, most composers test the words of the song with their knowledge of the Bible. Samuel said, “When inspirations come I write them down somewhere and I begin to study. I read the Bible according to the inspiration I have, and from the Bible, I can write.” Another composer had a more assumed relationship between his received songs and the Scripture. “My songs come from Spirit inspiration. Those songs are linked to the Bible.”

Sometimes the inspiration comes from God while a composer is reading the Bible.

Although most composers said that inspiration included both text and melody, one composer revealed that he received melodies by inspiration, but then turned to the Bible to find text for the song.

Along with reading the Bible, composers had experienced receiving songs at different times during their day, even during menial tasks. One composer described this as receiving songs in “natural” situations, such as walking down the street, waiting for the bus, while at work, or in the middle of a conversation with someone. In these occurrences, the receiving of a song is usually unexpected.

Songs can also come during the night through dreams. Most composers reported that they were given songs while dreaming. If given a song during the night, most said they had to get up and write them down right away, or if they owned a recorder, they had to record them quickly so they would not be forgotten. Many lamented that they had lost received songs because they could not remember them.

Inspired songs can also be given for a specific situation that an individual is facing. Context was described as an important factor for composition.

First of all, the context. I am in a situation and this helps me to make a song, but we know that inspiration comes from the Holy Spirit. This means that the Holy Spirit tells us what we are living so we can write songs, for example, the second song was saying that our body is a parish of the church, of the Holy Spirit. This is what I wrote at one time in my Christian life. I was living in sin at this time and the church told me to go away. When the church put me out, the Holy Spirit inspired me this song. He says to me that my body belongs to the Holy Spirit and I must have a sanctified life. Every time, in the situation you are facing, with the help of the Holy Spirit you can write a song.

Another composer said, “Sometimes, we read some text in the Bible or you can get inspiration from our own times life. When you see how things are going in your life,

now you can get inspiration and make a song. This leads us to write a song.” Some referenced situations include not having enough money for school, having compassion for those who are hurting, and having a dispute with a friend.

Songs received by inspiration are usually only the melody of a song, or a portion of a melody for a song. One director described the process in this way:

When inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit puts something in me. So from then on, I try to arrange an appropriate *melodie* and harmony of sounds, so I try to arrange according to various voices and therefore I bring it here to the choir so people can sing to God’s glory.

The act of creating a song typically requires both given inspiration and the skill to appropriately arrange the inspired idea. Ultimately, this is all to serve the highest purpose — the praise and glory of God.

### **Mennonite Culture**

In order to gain thoughts on Mennonite identity among Congolese, a method of comparison was employed. The guiding question was: Mennonite music is thought to be inspired by God and sung for “the glory of God,” but how does it compare with other musical landscapes, both secular and sacred? Concepts of Mennonite identity were also revealed through asking questions regarding the duration of membership in a particular congregation or choir. This question was initially asked as a precursor to discussion on changing music practices, but themes were determined, interpreted, and added to the discussion of boundaries.

A few generations have passed, and Congolese Mennonites now have familial and cultural ties related to their denomination. When asked, “how long have you attended Mennonite churches?” most informants included their family history, making statements such as, “My parents were Mennonite and I am Mennonite.” One informant said that he

enjoyed singing *cantiques* and when asked “why?” he replied, “I don’t know why I like these songs. Perhaps it is in my blood because I was born a Mennonite and I want to hear Mennonite songs.”

Samuel is a composer from the *jeunes* generation whose songs include instruments and popular elements, therefore contrasting with music by other Mennonite composers. I asked him if there is anything about his songs that makes them “Mennonite.” He replied, “I’m wishing to get them [the church] popular songs. But I am a Mennonite. When I write my songs I’m writing them as a Mennonite.” For him, being a member of the Mennonite Church is what makes his songs “Mennonite,” not the style of his songs. His desire to write in popular styles for his church community did not seem contradictory, or even “less Mennonite” for him.

### **Mennonite Song Identity**

The “Mennonite” label is more than nominal, and it can be inferred that concepts of being Mennonite inform music making. Music in Congolese Mennonite Churches spans from conservative practices, including those traditions that have been preserved from the mission era, to charismatic practices, or those that have been heavily influenced by the revivalist movement. Although conservative churches seem the most concerned with keeping Mennonite traditions, elements exist that unite Mennonite congregations and provide them with a cohesive identity. Mennonite song identity consists of a set of principles, particular types of sounds, and connection to heritage.

Interviews with informants from the same congregation often yielded highly codified responses. Most of the interviewees from Kimia, a conservative church that more frequently used *cantiques*, said that their songs are different from other churches

because they sing about Mennonite principles. Interestingly, most *cantiques* are not originally Mennonite in origin; they are songs known by many Protestants. The idea of “Mennonite principles” was interpreted in two ways: one includes tenets of the faith, such as separation of church and state, adult baptism and non-resistance; the other is culturally centered, such as the frequency of hymns and dancing.

Unlike the *cantiques*, newly-written choir music occasionally refers to Mennonite specific principles, such as adult baptism and non-resistance. In general, the most common theme observed was non-resistance, both regarding the nation and peace in domestic situations. The director of *Chorale de Trompette* wrote a song titled “Mennonite,” which speaks of Mennonite principles and which extols the virtues of Menno Simon, the Anabaptist leader for whom the Mennonite church received its name. The composer provided background to his song.

It is thanks to him [Menno Simons] that God’s word has come here and enriched us. He told us about baptism of water. He was with his disciples and many of them were killed and there was persecution. It’s why now we are happy and we acknowledge Menno Simons, and give him thanks for all he has done.

For some Mennonites, identification with the founder and the first generation of martyrs is important in reinforcing the tenets of their faith.

Currently, there is concern over youth in the Church neglecting Mennonite principles, but the discussion of principles in this context was culturally centered. A program called *Rejemenco* was formed to help the younger generation reinstate Mennonite culture. The founder of *Rejemenco* stated, “Young Mennonites think that we are cold and when worshipping we don’t go with the speed. It doesn’t sound good. They

want lots of movement.” Earlier that day, we attended a Mennonite service that was more charismatic than traditional. He commented,

Perhaps you noticed that the music tone was too loud? It wasn’t better for the ears. And when some are singing others are coming there and they are dancing and so forth. They like things like that, but it’s not Mennonite. Today was not Mennonite and it was too long, instead of cutting some activities. If they don’t do anything, Mennonite culture will be lost.

The sentence “And when some are singing others are coming there and they are dancing and so forth” is made in reference to dance occurring in the service outside of the offertory, which is the acceptable time. As the choirs were performing, a few congregants came to the front and danced, even though they were not members of the choir.

Apart from principles, there is a sound and manner of singing associated with being Mennonite. One woman said, “We follow the *melodie* of the Mennonite Church” — a statement that addresses an overall type of sound that specifically relates to the Mennonite church. Although statements involving distinct *melodie* were often given, asking for descriptions of the sound itself was often a fruitless task. I expected statements regarding more specific elements of music, such as discussion on rhythm and harmony.

However, statements can be made regarding how Mennonites perceive their sound, although many answers were indirect. A member of Ndinga Moya, the group that preserves *cantiques*, remembers,

In the past, we were singing like Mennonites, classics. But then came a time when we forgot about our Mennonite identity. We are now getting the influence of other choirs. We are not singing like Mennonites. In Kinshasa, for instance, it’s hard to find a group that sings like Ndinga Moyo. Choir members in Kinshasa have a different style of singing.



Observing Ndinga Moyo practice in comparison to other church practice, I noticed differences in the voicing and instrumentation used in the performance of *cantiques*. Rather than dividing soprano, alto, tenor, and bass by function, Ndinga Moyo utilized women as sopranos and altos in the treble register, and men as tenors and basses in the bass register. Unlike what was considered “Mennonite” by some church members, the use of electronic instruments was prominent, including instrumental introductions and interludes.

In the aforementioned interview with a member of Ndinga Moyo, I inquired further about the statement, “Choir members in Kinshasa have a different style of singing.” I asked how the Kinshasa style of singing compares to communities outside of the city. Music in rural churches sounds more like the style that was established by missionaries, and according to him, this is attributed to not having access or the funds to buy electronic instruments. The “Mennonite sound” is often set in contrast to electronic instruments. Choir members boasted that while other churches need instruments to make music, they do not, because they have voices. Similarly, one woman said, “I don’t have the exact words, but when you are singing and you stop and then only the guitar goes on without singing. This is appropriate in the revivalist churches, but Mennonites don’t use that.” The concept of instrumental music without singing is largely outside Mennonite tradition.

Although there remains a concept of traditional Mennonite sound, those boundaries are often stretched and can seem contradictory. Ndinga Moyo’s use of electronic instruments falls outside of tradition, yet their purpose is to preserve Mennonite culture. Only one track on their CD displays the traditional Mennonite style

of singing; it opens with an organ introduction and is followed by unaccompanied, four-part singing. When I addressed this with the leader, he reported that for members of Ndinga Moyo, the most critical aspect of their singing is the songs that are being sung, not the arrangements of those songs.

A third identifier of Mennonite song is the heritage of hymns left by missionaries. *Cantiques* remain the body of songs most broadly known by Mennonites, in contrast with the other types of songs used in church services which are often more unique to specific congregations. Other types of songs are written by members in the congregation, or are borrowed from nearby churches. Aside from *cantiques*, few songs develop notoriety throughout the city or country.

The artistic director at Nebo addressed this as he spoke about the amount of time it takes to learn songs. “It depends. Some songs are known, but they haven’t repeated them in the group. Those take a lot of time. Mennonite songs don’t take more time because many of them know them.” To clarify, I asked if he was referring to the songs brought by missionaries. He replied, “yes, the songs in the book.” This response was from the most charismatic church observed.

Similarly, others informants also identified Mennonite songs as “songs in the book,” or stated that their church possesses “books used by Mennonites.” No other types of songs are written down and collected, therefore an identifier of traditional Mennonite song is notated words. Typically, the singers in the *jeunes* category identified this more frequently than singers from older generations. The men and women from Ndinga Moyo did not use this identifier during their interviews.

In addition, these “songs in the book” have been translated into many languages, unlike most of the newly-written songs. *Cantiques* are not only well known, they are often known in more than one language. One young man said that Mennonite songs were the ones that he used to sing in Kikongo, Lingala, Chokwe, and French. For some, it seemed a point of pride that the hymns have been translated into many different languages. Even throughout the city of Kinshasa, they continue to be sung in multiple languages.

Another instance of this was observed outside of interviews and formal observations. While en route to observe a church choir, I came across the song “Nearer My God to Thee” in a *cantique*. This led to an impromptu singalong; I started singing the soprano line in English, my guide sang the tenor part in French and my translator sang the bass line in Lingala.

*Cantiques* are also viewed as a connection to Christians in the Western world. One young composer said, “First, for us Mennonites, let’s take for example this book [*cantique*]. These songs are international. Wherever you go in the United States or Europe, people sing these songs.”

#### Comparisons to the Outside

For most church members, being Mennonite is part of their identity as Christians. Music is a tangible and integral part of determining that identity; DR Congo has vibrant music traditions, both secular and sacred. Questions regarding comparison aided in the discussion of Mennonite identity, as well as reveal concept. How does the philosophy of making music by Mennonites compare to non-Christian Congolese music? How do

Mennonites view their music making with the other prominent Christian practices in DR Congo? Their opinions on the outside world were also sought.

Many informants reported they did not like non-Christian music. Even more directly, some said that they cannot like non-Christian music because they are Christians. This question was posed to both singers and instrumentalists, with instrumentalists also asked if they ever played or performed music outside of the church. A keyboard player reported, “No, I play only Christian songs. I don’t like playing non-Christian.” Similarly, a guitarists responded, “No, I’m a Christian. I can’t play for non-Christian music. I can only play for Christian music.”

One informant, when discussing the types of instruments used in Christian music and non-Christian music, thought they were basically the same. However, without a hint of contradiction he also said, “there is no similarity between what we do and non-Christians.” Although he heard no difference in sound, the function and purpose were vastly different, and therefore he was able to state that no similarities exist.

Only two informants had outlying opinions concerning sound and function. One man said, “I don’t see much difference.” Another man had the opinion that not all non-Christian music was inappropriate, believing that some of the messages are moral, and could be useful to Christians.

One reason for the mainstream Mennonite thought of complete separation from the world’s music lies behind the concept of inspiration. Songs are either given by God or they are produced through the efforts of man, in which case the latter are considered by some to be “useless.” Inspiration is a primary concern in determining the validity of a song. For an uninspired song, such as those sung by non-Christians, musicians try to

make efforts out of their own power and skill. They are responsible for not only arranging the song, but for producing the original idea for the song. While most Mennonites simply disregarded secular music because it is produced by man, two outlying informants claimed that secular music was a product of supernatural powers that were evil, such as sorcery. One man said, “The difference is that in the world, they look for magic powers so they can modify their voices. But for us in the church, we rely on the Holy Spirit.”

The question “who gets the praise and glory?” also aids in distinguishing between Christian music and secular music. Many informants said that Christian music is for God’s glory, while non-Christians sing for the glory of people, such as politicians, women, and prominent societal figures. Other people spoke more broadly, claiming that non-Christians sing for “the glory of the world.” The “world” may include people, but it also includes nature, a city, or a country.

The question, “what does music do?” also illuminated a binary mode of thought. Through music, Christians have the power to either preach a message, as through choir music and *cantiques*, or slowly bring people to God, which is a purpose of *musique d’adoration*. According to most, non-Christian music does not teach or educate. One young woman said, “With this [Christian] music, people are worshipping God and they are asking God what they need. In the song, God is giving answers to those needs. In non-Christian music, people are singing what they want. Youth today are just doing this music that is useless.” In addition to “singing what they want,” she believed that non-Christians are also singing for the purpose of making money.

Questions regarding the influence of music on the well-being of people also provide insight. Many stated that non-Christian music moves people towards evil, rather than towards God. “Because there [the world] they want to excite people to dance more and put the body in peak movement. But here [church] we sing slowly so that people can be sent slowly to God and can be put into link with their Savior.” In comparison, singing Christian music keeps evil away. “For us in the church, we praise God, and when we praise God it keeps us away from evil. For us in the church we sing before our God and He takes praise from that, but in the world they just want to get people in their magic power.”

### **Associations and Sound**

In general, Mennonites have clear conceptual divisions between Christian and non-Christian music, especially concerning sources and purposes. Considering the sound itself, however, is a more elusive task. Guiding questions for this inquiry include: Is there any association of sound or musical practice that reinforces categories of Christian and non-Christian music? Is there anything about the sound or physical posture of non-Christian music that makes it unacceptable for Christians?

Unlike discussing differences in sources and purposes, questions discussing sound yielded more variety of response. Some informants could not ontologically separate sound and purpose. “Yes, it sounds different, because we sing for God’s glory and they sing for the world.” Typically, the spectrum of responses ranged from “the sounds are the same” to the sounds of the world are “faster” and “noisier.”

Among the informants belonging to churches with instruments, many said that the sound was the same, and only the content differed. Others said the instruments were the

same, but they were used in a dissimilar manner. In the church, voices are still regarded as the dominant sound media; in popular music, the band is more important. However, informants belonging to churches without instruments typically strive to attain them. One stated, “We have now to add instruments because it’s very important. This is evolution. We have to go with it.” Some view secular music as accompanied and Christian music as unaccompanied, as stated by the choir director at Kimia: “The sounds are quite different. Outside music is played or accompanied, which turns around the *melodie*. Christian music is not like that.” In other words, instruments dominate *melodie* when they are used in secular styles.

Many informants also addressed differences between Mennonite and non-Christian performance practice. Non-Christian music encourages an excessive amount of dance, which is viewed as irreverent. One woman offered, “We are respectful when singing for God. They [the world] have much more movement, which is not praising God.”

### **Comparisons to Other Churches**

The two major religious influences in Congo are the Catholic church and the revivalist movement. A significant Protestant representation can also be found in Congo. Making the assumption that other Protestant denominations had similar paths from mission era churches to post-independence churches, I decided to exclude them from the scope of the study. I remained open to mention of influence from other Protestant practices, but it was never mentioned during the course of the interviews or in casual conversation. Ultimately, I desired to know the Mennonite perception of only Catholic and revivalist churches, because these two institutions represented polarities concerning

music practice; the Catholic Church is generally viewed as cold and stoic while revivalist churches are fiery and impassioned.

It quickly became evident that Mennonites had more to discuss concerning revivalist churches than regarding the Catholic Church. Many said that they didn't know much about Catholic music, and many seemed suspicious of it. Revivalist churches seem to be more intriguing, and, for traditional Mennonites, were more of a threat, as many young church members have left Mennonite congregations in order to attend revivalist churches. No one seemed concerned that members would leave to attend Catholic Churches.

### **Perceptions of the Catholic Church**

Concerning sound, most informed me that the Catholics use a different *melodie* from Mennonites. The sound and practice of worship is described by Mennonites as “slow” and “gloomy” and only written in minor keys. One man explained: “The difference is mode. In Catholic Churches, their music is founded on minor modes, but here we use major modes.” A few pointed out that Catholics used instruments, while they use voices. A former Catholic said, “Here you have mainly voice, which is different from the Catholic Church.”

A young drummer from Nebo pointed out the stoicism of the Catholic Church. According to him, since they are “sleepy,” they cannot “go ahead.” Additionally, the slow and somber music causes people to stand still and not move. A former Catholic informant said, “when we sing here in this church, I feel it deeply.” Mennonites value an emotional response, and perceive that Catholics do not “feel it deeply.”



### Perceptions of Revivalist Churches

Some, especially younger Mennonites, said that there was no difference between music in the Mennonite Church and revivalist music. Most of the musicians at Nebo, for example, stated that music practice was the same between the two groups. The drummer, however, said that Mennonites take the middle ground between Catholics and revivalists. Beyond Nebo, there was some expressed trepidation concerning the practices of the revivalist church. Only one person took a more extreme position, claiming revivalist music as “not inspired.”

For informants who did not believe that revival music and Mennonite music sound alike, the use of instruments created the most significant difference. Most obviously, all revivalist churches have instruments, but not all Mennonite Churches use instruments. For those who attend churches without instruments, revivalist music is equated with popular music and instruments. For those who did use instruments, many claimed that revivalists use instruments in a similar manner to non-Christians, or popular musicians. One choir director noted,

Revivalists churches use instruments in the way of outside music. Revival and prophetic churches have brought music that has sent Christian music in a new way. Today there is confusion between Christian music and outside music. Only the words change. The *melodie* can be either used for the revival church or it can be used outside.

For him, it is problematic for church music to sound like outside music. He continued to say, “God, to correct this confusion, made a way for *adoration*, or worshipping music, which is accompanied by guitars and pianos.” Even though it is the revivalists who are responsible for the development of *adoration* music, this type of music is viewed

favorably by Mennonites from all generations. *Adoration* is slow, and although instruments are used, it was never referred to as “noisy.”

In general, there is sentiment that revivalists are too irreverent because of their engagement in activities like trance, seizure, and copious amounts of dancing. They also have a reputation for not being as diligent concerning Biblical authority and the charge to “give glory to God.” One director stated, “In the revivalist churches, they don’t use words from the book of songs or Scriptures. They just take words from here or there and make it music.” In another example, one informant reported that, in the revivalist church, they shout out the name of evangelists or other churches leaders. She said that the Mennonites would never do that, they would only shout the name of God.

It is also thought that revivalists are prone to sing only for the enjoyment of singing. When asked to make a comparison, one man offered,

Music is a profession — it is not a game or a use of time. I can say that in this church there are really people who are worshipping God. I can say that the music is the same, but here they are really worshipping God, instead of just singing songs. Instead of singing, we worship God in prayers.

For him, the act of singing in Church is elevated above other types of singing. The final phrase of the above statement, “we worship God in prayers” still refers to song, but this song functions in a manner different from other singing. The barrier between these functions is strong enough to prompt the phrase, “instead of singing,” even when the physical act of singing is referenced.

As a result of the revivalist movement, there is a renewed point of discussion in the church, namely the question of “how much of the ‘world’ should be allowed to enter into the church?” One woman reported to me, “Music sung by the revivalist churches is

part of the world coming into the songs. There is a singer, a famous one, Brother Patrice. He said that the world has come to the church, and the church has gone to the world.” I asked if this was true for Mennonites. She responded, “There is a big difference between Mennonite music and the revival music songs.”

Although a big difference is perceived by most, a few informants pointed out the trend of revivalist churches singing missionary songs during their services. With glee, one elder provided me with an insight into the Revivalist church. According to him, revivalists consider the songs that were left by missionaries to be traditional, and therefore not inspired. Revivalists claim to only sing inspired songs, but are unknowingly using “uninspired” missionary songs in their services. For some Mennonites, there is great joy in this irony.

Most Mennonites seem adamant to avoid too much of the world’s influence in the Church, and are generally proud of their musical heritage. The revivalist movement is viewed with both intrigue and suspicion, and some of its elements are assimilated while others are rejected. Undisputedly, revivalist churches have created new discourse within the Congolese Mennonite community.

### **Summary**

Fifty informants and ensembles from twelve congregations comprised the population that yielded data for the present study. Four style categories were identified along with their function in the context of the worship service. A timeline was constructed that indicated minimal change in church music practice for the first sixty years, with more significant changes occurring after independence and migration. Attitudes toward changes were discussed, including thoughts on what music was like in

traditional African culture before the missionaries arrived. The overarching purpose of music in religion was to glorify God, but music also has the power to bring worshippers into a different state of mind — that of being in the presence of God. Boundaries of sacred and secular were addressed by comparing music to secular music and revivalist music. The concept of inspired music versus non-inspired music was discovered.

## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

### **Introduction**

This study was an attempt to examine Mennonite music in the Congo, with express focus on musical thought, or the ideas and concepts surrounding the process of music making. Four areas of musical thought were examined: (1) current classification and function, (2) history and perception of change, (3) the nature of sacred music, and (4) boundaries between sacred and secular, including the identification of aspects of music and music practice considered acceptable and aspects that are forbidden. This was accomplished through the ethnographic techniques of interview and observation with Congolese Mennonites in the capitol city of Kinshasa. Through conversation and observation, data were provided for each of the areas of musical thought described in this study.

This chapter will follow the organization of the four areas of musical thought that formed the organization of the results chapter. However, thoughts on history and the boundaries between sacred and secular will be discussed together because they produced many overlapping themes. Information presented may not follow the data established by each area, that is, data described for one area may be used in the discussion for another area. Following the discussion on the four areas, thoughts will be discussed regarding the results and how they reflect African and Mennonite mindsets.

## AREA 1: Classification

### Melodie and the Autonomy of Sound

The first category addresses how sounds are distinguished, thereby creating categories for different styles of music. Even though there was enough distinction of sound to determine four styles, the boundaries between these styles are sometimes blurred. *Cantiques* were used by *adoration* groups. I often would mistake fast choir songs and *luoange* when taken out of context because the instrumentation and tempi were all the same. The composer Samuel's ensemble was called a choir, but he used the same instrumentation and voicing as *adoration* groups. Function seems to be more important in distinguishing style than properties of sound. Supporting evidence for this mindset is also found through the division of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. It was the function of the line that identified the classification, for example, sopranos sing melody, altos sing a lower harmony, and tenors sing the higher harmony. This does not represent choral practice in other parts of the world. Men's choirs in the United States use the designation of tenor 1, tenor 2, baritone, and bass rather than soprano, alto, tenor, and bass.

The term "*melodie*," or overall sound, is perhaps the most common word used in discussing sound classification. Style classification is largely determined or discussed by function. *Melodie* is the only word that strictly references sound. The term was not used by informants when describing the difference between the four styles of song; it was used most often to define how Congolese Mennonite Churches sound different from secular music and other types of Christian music in the Congo. It was also used to describe how choirs are distinguished. Even though the function of choir music is the same, the sounds were differentiated by the word *melodie*.

It was difficult to comprehend the concept of *melodie* because the informants' descriptions of sound were rarely broken into discussion on specific musical elements. When talking with informants about musical sounds, specifically about what makes a song sound "good," I expected discussion about specific elements of music, such as liking a song because of its rhythm. The most common statement, however, was the enjoyment of a song because of its *melodie*. Initially, it was confusing to hear talk of *melodie*, because I assumed it referred to the tune, or melody, of the song.

A characteristic of Mennonite music in Congo is the aptitude of each congregation, and even each ensemble, to independently develop its own sonic concept. Different *melodies* are being developed in the Congolese Mennonite Church which are specific to each congregation, creating sounds that are largely independent from other congregations. Although cohesive elements between churches certainly exist, the concept of individual *melodie* is prevalent not only in church choirs, but also in the songs sung by congregations. Even when singing the historic *cantiques*, the manner in which animation has changed individual songs varies from congregation to congregation. Musical notation is never used, so no final, written rule is employed. No restriction or deterrent is placed on the church's choice to change songs into a setting they prefer through adding and changing the sound.

As stated by a choir director, it is a significant disadvantage if a leader cannot write music, or establish *melodie* for his or her ensemble. Transmission of songs is not always easy. Music is not notated, and other forms of media are not readily accessible. Even if they were, many who write songs have no means to record them in order to share them with a broader population. It is expensive to purchase studio time. One director

claimed this as a reason why Mennonite music is not well known to non-Mennonites; they have no money to produce recordings. Directors who do not write have to borrow songs and *melodies* from other choral ensembles. Sometimes a choir will serve as a mentor to a new group, teaching them their songs and *melodie*.

## **AREAS 2 and 4: History and Boundaries of Sacred and Secular**

### Changing Influences, Shifting Boundaries

The difficulty of reconciling culture and religion for Congolese Mennonites is due, in part, to constantly shifting influences or pressures from outside of the church. Musical ideology is shaped by outside influence, and with increased globalization, musical systems and contexts inevitably undergo change. Changes in music and music making do not occur without the influence of extra-musical pressure, as witnessed in the timeline and causes for change as discovered through the interview process. As cultures meet, they must make decisions regarding the assimilation of new musical elements, such as the use of a certain instrument, and they have certain boundaries challenged regarding the meaning and purpose of music. On occasion, new categories for musical conception are created.

The beginnings of Mennonite missionary work exemplify changes occurring in the external and the internal. In animistic thought, there is no clear distinction between, or even a concept for, sacred and secular. In animistic thought, spirit is in everything; it dwells in objects such as trees and the ocean. In Christian thought, spirit is not in everything, which is seen in the modern notion that music is either inspired by the Holy Spirit or it is merely the effort of men. With missionary influence, a boundary was



established between sacred life and secular life. For converts to Christianity, new categories of thought were created, which is made manifest through music.

In animistic thought, appropriateness in music is determined by using the correct elements at the appropriate time. In animistic societies, all people participate in the same rituals and the same rites of passage, and therefore they have a homogenous musical practice. When influenced by the external force of missionary thought, musical practice was no longer a matter of appropriateness, but for new Mennonite converts, music was divided into two categories: sacred, or the music taught to them by the missionaries and used for the glory of God, and profane, music practiced by “pagans” or those on the outside.

From 1911 to the 1960s, this binary mode of thought created from the initial meeting of indigenous Congolese and Mennonites was minimally confronted by additional external forces. During colonization, the Belgian Congo was divided into regions, and each denomination was granted a portion of the country in which they were permitted to proselytize. Therefore, Mennonite churches were formed in rural areas with little influence from other churches. Under the guidance of missionaries, a new, rather isolated community was created from Congolese who chose to convert to Christianity. Once converted, the outside influence of animism, which was decidedly outside of their new way of thinking, was of little threat to change the newly-formed practices introduced by missionaries. There was no other model for Christian music, and mimicking pagan practice was prohibited.

This binary mode of thought was first challenged when Mennonites left rural isolation and came in contact with urban churches. Previously, the boundaries between

sacred and secular, or the practices of the church compared to the practices of “the world,” were once exceedingly clear. As one elder reported, it was only after witnessing other Congolese Christians using drums and dancing that some Congolese Mennonites raised the question, “If they can do it, why not us?” For the first time, the boundaries drawn between sacred and secular were challenged, partly because the definition of the word “world” had changed.

When missionaries arrived, the concept of “world,” which was taught to be avoided, was defined by the traditions of animism. Currently, animism is not a temptation for those in the Mennonite Church and is not as prevalent in Congolese society. The strong associations that once existed have been diminished and decontextualized. Although animistic traditions are still practiced, they were observed as an attempt to preserve culture, for entertainment, and as a means to gain monetary tips from bystanders. One such demonstration was observed at a restaurant by an ensemble of young men and women. They wore traditional dress and were excitedly dancing and drumming. During this display, one of the Mennonite boys was frightened and said, “there are demons down there.”

Today, referencing the “world” does not predominantly include animism, but rather popular Congolese culture, which includes electronic instruments and musical styles like hip-hop and R&B. Ironically, it is influence from America that once again effects music practice. This is globalization of a different kind. As popular styles are imported from America, they are absorbed into popular culture. Popular culture is assimilated into revivalist church services, which are, in turn, influencing Mennonite Churches.

This stretching of boundaries forced decisions regarding musical practice in the church, whereas during the missionary era, only one model was presented. When the missionaries left, the use of traditional drums in the church was reconsidered. After some debate, church members reached a consensus that the old associations with animism were no longer present in the minds of worshippers.

Similarly, debate has surrounded prayer practices, dancing, and volume. Currently, the boundaries seem to be drawn in divergent places, and are typically divided by generation. For conservative elders and leaders, dancing is not forbidden, but should be used sparingly and only during certain times of the service, such as during the offertory. The same is true for the length of service and volume. Services should not be too long and electronic volume during singing should not be too loud. These things were labeled by some as “not Mennonite.”

These labels are an attempt to set principles, but they are not concrete. Gaining insight into more specific detail about what is forbidden and what is accepted was an elusive task. Although some of the rules were clear, such as the forbidden act of becoming slain in the Spirit, nothing in itself is necessarily forbidden. Moderation is prized and a posture of reverence is highly valued.

Interestingly, *adoration* music seemed to be absorbed without conflict. *Adoration* music is not seen as irreverent, even though it does have popular elements, such as the use of electronic instruments and an “R&B” style. It is slow, and does not put the body, as one informant commented, “in a peak condition.” In short, it fits the appeal of coming before God in a humble, reverent manner.

### Factors from the Inside

Influences from outside of the church are further complicated by matters from the inside, especially the generational gap between the elders and church members in the *jeunes* age group. Many leaders said that they had “no choice” but to adapt popular practices because many young Mennonites were leaving the church. The church, once flourishing, has lost many members to revivalist churches in the city. In general, determining a fixed boundary of appropriateness for reverence does not appeal to the younger generation, especially if they can switch to revivalist churches without consequence. Revivalist churches do not have stigmas regarding dance and other popular elements in the church.

From the *jeunes* generation, the following pleas were heard: “We have to have instruments because it’s very important,” and “Instruments will allow us to have many people come and hear when we are singing.” Another young woman commented, “This is the evolution and we have to go with it.” From the churches already possessing popular instruments, such as Nebo, there seemed to be ambivalence toward Mennonite culture, thus inspiring the formation of Rejemenco and Ndinga Moyo, which are groups with the goal of preserving Mennonite culture and principles.

### Categories Determined

Secular society proved simpler to keep out of church life when the choices were either Mennonite or traditional African practice, rather than Mennonite or the revivalist movement. Before independence, it was not difficult to dismiss practices that were non-Christian, and therefore it was easier to maintain rigid categories. Musical elements outside of the Mennonite Church were obviously not inspired.

When deciding how much “world” to let in, challenges from revivalist churches create more conflict than challenges directly from secular society. For Mennonites, other Christians who fuse popular elements in their services confuse the categories of inspired and non-inspired music. This raises the question: is it possible to be Christian and perform music that mimics sounds from popular society — a segment of the population viewed with near contempt? A mistrust of the world combined with the trend of young Mennonites flocking to revivalist churches has created a complex discourse. The desire to grow and maintain membership influences the discussion of sacred and secular boundaries. Decisions are then formed on what should be accepted and what should be rejected by the church.

### **AREA 3: What is Religious Music?**

#### **Sacred Spaces**

Traditional Mennonite practice is characterized, in part, by personal piety. This has led to a mistrust of pleasure, including pleasure in music. For many segments of the church, emotional experiences are viewed with suspicion, and although there is belief in a metaphysical realm, coming into another state of mind through music or by any other means is also mistrusted. In the Congolese Mennonite church, however, this alternate state is an important aspect of the religious experience.

For Congolese Mennonites, music is needed to transform people from their physical reality to the state of being that occurs in the presence of God. One leader stated, “Through songs people are sent to a spiritual dimension. They go far. Some of them fall down and go on praying to the Lord and telling Him all their problems.” The phrase used most often to describe this transition is “go ahead.” For example, it was a

criticism of the Catholic Church that its music was too slow, and therefore people could not, “go ahead” into the spiritual dimension.

Similarly, church music leaders often reported that it was their job to “send” people into prayer, again indicating a change of being. Prayer is conceptualized as being in the presence of God, and once there, people are able to communicate with God without any hindrance. The concept of prayer is important to the religious experience. Even when asking “How long have you attended this church?” The response was often, “I have *prayed* at this church my entire life.” Church is a place to meet God and to talk with God. This is often accomplished through different types of music, assuming it is inspired music. Even the *cantiques* were and are said to be a medium for prayer.

The power of music to accomplish this goal, of sending people “ahead,” is the mark of an acceptable form of music in the church. However, there are cautions against entering the presence of God too quickly. As with popular music, or with some revivalist music, dancing excites the body too much, resulting in an attitude of irreverence towards God rather than nearness to God. Dancing should not become the focal point of the service.

Control of the body and soundness of mind is necessary in coming into the presence of the Lord. One concern of Mennonite leaders is that some congregants have, or are tempted to become “slain in the Spirit,” a practice not accepted by Mennonites. Becoming “slain in the Spirit” is a practice observed in charismatic churches, including revivalist churches. While in this state of mind, people lose control of their bodies, resembling the ancient acts of animistic possession. This is feared and forbidden by Mennonites and is contrary to what Mennonites believe about being sent into the

presence of God. Thus, this is another boundary to be considered and another practice observed by outside Christians to either be accepted or rejected. However, this practice is widely rejected, with no debate necessary.

To come with reverence before God, congregants must slowly be brought into the spiritual dimension. A criticism of revivalist practice is the attempt to come before the Lord in a brash, haughty manner, which is outside the Mennonite cultural norm. Generally, *adoration* music, which seems to be widely accepted, and accepted without reservation, is viewed as the best source for accomplishing this goal. The tempi are slow, and although it often elicits the response of tears, control over the body's motor skills is maintained. In this state of mind, they can, as one informant offered, "bend the knee" before God, or humbly come into His presence in order to communicate with Him.

#### Vestiges of Animistic Thought

This study represents a people group who, until the arrival of missionaries in 1911, adhered to the traditional practice of animism. Although most aspects of musical thought have decidedly shifted toward Western ideas, vestiges of the former mindset were observed in current music practice. Unfortunately, it is difficult to determine or describe the specific ritualistic practices used in Congo. Like many traditional African practices, they have either been lost or decontextualized. This is especially true in countries like Congo, where mass migrations have taken place. However, knowledgeable assumptions may be made from studying shamanistic and animistic traditions around the world, as well as through consulting initial accounts by missionaries.

In animistic practice, drum patterns and songs represented certain spirits, and power is believed to increase with the number of people attending a given ritualistic

ceremony. Songs were thought to have been given by spirits or made up by man, with more power attributed to songs given by spirits. Music also had the power to cause humans to become possessed by spirits, or cause the spirits to bring success and health to individuals and villages.

As reported by missionaries, the medicine man was the person in each village who possessed access to deities. If someone needed medical attention, they were brought to him to be healed. The medicine man summoned the spirits through song and dance, knowing the appropriate types of song to use in each instance. In this situation, success of the song is determined by the correct person singing the correct song. Through the medicine man, the purpose of the song was to bring healing. In contrast, informants in this study reported being healed through song and God's presence, but receiving good health is not viewed as the purpose of any song or style of music. In general, traditional animistic ritual is performed to appeal for health, protection, and good fortune in harvest. This was not discussed in current practice, indicating a shift in musical thought.

The concept of proper ritual has now been replaced by proper state of mind. For Congolese Mennonites, the noblest form of performance consists of a reverent attitude combined with the acknowledged purpose of singing only for the "glory of God." This is the truest way of producing music, and it represents a changed sense of "correctness" in the musical experience. Although on a certain level this is a change of musical thought, this adamant sense of right and wrong is similar to animistic practices, and is not typically observed in Western Christianity. Such strict boundaries of songs as inspired or not inspired lie outside of the mainstream of thought in the West. Songs in Western Christianity are not typically thought to be directly given to worshippers by the Holy



Spirit in a spontaneous moment or in a dream. In animism and in the Congolese Mennonite Church, songs are a direct gift from a supernatural source, usually occurring in a single, unexpected moment.

Some interpretations of musical experience did not change as drastically. Music still possesses the power to ward away evil spirits. The definition of “evil spirits” may have changed, however, as Christians would now consider medicine men to be “evil.” Additionally, in traditional practices, the power to keep evil spirits away through music was accomplished through the medicine man, while in Mennonite practice, one can access God directly to ward away unwelcome spirits.

### **Implications and Future Research**

The spread of Western culture by missionaries of all denominations has extended to almost every corner of the world. Western Christian hymnody is arguably the genre of music which has assimilated into the greatest number of nations. The work of Western, Christian missionaries is commonly discussed as an influencing force in cross-cultural music practice, yet there are few attempts to return to these communities to examine the long-term effects of music practice and philosophy in current Christian practice.

The Congolese Mennonites have had their boundaries stretched in ways specific to their surrounding cultural context. This is only a single example. The Mennonite Church has been planted all around the world and is vibrant not only in DR Congo, but also thrives in other countries, such as India. Similar questions should be asked: Was there discussion as to what musical system to employ when Mennonites planted the first church? Have the hymns introduced by missionaries changed, or have they been abandoned altogether? What are the surrounding cultural practices that have affected the

Indian Mennonite Church? There is no prevalent, charismatic Christian force to serve as an influence, such as with the revivalist church of DR Congo. In general, the population in India is hostile towards Christianity, which could have potential to affect practice.

Beyond the Mennonite Church, churches from other denominations have been planted in cultures where there is not a previous “Christian” music. In these scenarios, how is a body of Christian music created? The same questions could be applied to other religious systems, as well. Every cross-cultural religion must reconcile religion with cultural practice. Additional questions could include: In areas without media and a previous indigenous tradition to follow, how are songs and practices transmitted? If song transmission is not easily accomplished, like in DR Congo, does the concept of autonomy and the burgeoning of composers and compositions occur in other cultures’ religions?

In some regions where Christian missionaries have proselytized, syncretism, or the blending of religions, has occurred. Such examples have occurred in Native American religious movements and Caribbean religious traditions. Western missionaries to all regions of the world encountered cultural dilemmas, such as determining the most appropriate systems of music to use in worship services. Was there anything different in how cultural traditions were presented that made the church assimilate and blend with other religions? Why did syncretism occur in these cultures but not in others? Do remnants of hymns or other Western church traditions remain in these contexts? These concerns have not been formally assessed.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to examine musical thought, or the ideas and concepts surrounding music, among Congolese Mennonites. Congolese Mennonites have

a vibrant musical tradition that has been formed by many factors and influences. Upon converting to Christianity, Congolese converts who had previously observed the traditions of African animistic ritual were expected to wholly adopt Western musical culture, including four-part hymn singing. After sixty years of singing like Westerners, Congolese music started to change through a change in outside influences. Early Congolese Mennonite music practices were not affected by animistic culture, but Congolese independence and the movement of Mennonites to large cities put them in contact with a tradition that would greatly influence them. Each of these changes brought shifts in musical sound, but they also required shifts in musical conception.

This study was heavily influenced by Bruno Nettl's four-part model for organizing areas of musical thought as employed in *Blackfoot Musical Thought: Comparative Perspectives*. The four areas of concept used for this study are similar to Nettl's, but were modified to best describe the considerations deemed most important for the population studied in this examination. The four areas include: classification and function, history, nature of religious music making, and boundaries between sacred and profane.

#### Area 1: Song Classification and Function

Examination of song classification and function produced the identification of four different styles of music used in the Congolese Mennonite Church. The function of each of these different types of music was also considered. The term *melodie*, or overall sound, was discovered as an important part of understanding sound. It is the main term used to describe musical sound in a manner that is free from function. It also reflects the

idea that music is thought of as a whole unit, rather than readily broken down into specific elements for evaluation.

### Area 2: History

Through discussing history, a timeline was created that identified shifts in musical style. After the initial change from traditional African music to Mennonite hymn singing, musical practice remained the same for over a half century. Congolese independence brought Mennonites who had formerly been living in rural areas to the city. There, they observed practices by more charismatic churches and began changing their own music. Mennonite perception and attitude toward each phase of these changes seems generally positive. The younger generation is largely unaware of the initial changes that took place, but the elder generation regards missionary hymns as having special value. Older generations typically view the shifts toward popular style as something they had to do because many young people left the church for revival churches.

### Area 3: The Nature of Sacred Music and Music Making

The primary aim for music in the Congolese Mennonite Church is to sing or play instruments for the glory of God. Of all the answers given for various questions, this question yielded the most homogeneous responses. It is also believed that music has the power to bring a worshipper into a state of mind, that of being in God's presence and praying to Him. Secondary attributes in music include teaching, evangelizing, and providing comfort for people who are in pain. It is through this area that discussion can occur regarding vestiges of animistic thought and influence of Western Mennonite musical thought.

#### Area 4: Boundaries between Sacred and Secular

Mennonite identity was examined and compared to the music and music practices utilized by other communities, especially secular music, Catholic music, and music used in revivalist churches. The difference between sacred music and secular music is often described as “inspired” or “not inspired.” Inspired songs are songs given to man by the Holy Spirit, and songs that are not inspired are thought to be made by the efforts of man. The former has the most value, the latter is considered by some to be useless. Elements such as dancing and the use of instruments are placed in the category of sacred or profane. The most important principle to uphold is that God should be approached in a reverent, sincere, and thoughtful manner.

These four areas were created for the purpose of organizing discourse on musical thought among Congolese Mennonites. Many themes and ideas were presented that reflect the history and the influences that have shaped the musical life of the church. The Congolese Mennonite musical tradition has undergone great change, both in terms of sound and conception, over the past decades. It will continue to change. This study is a snapshot of a musical culture a century into its existence. Even though the tradition is only one hundred years old, the musical life of the church is one of its most treasured possessions and will continue to thrive, even though undergoing change, over the coming century.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**



## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### I. General Questions

#### Part A - Value of Music

1. Please state your name and the name of the church you attend.
2. Why do you sing?
3. Why do you think it is important for the Church to have songs?
4. What makes a song “good”?
5. What makes a worship service “good”?
6. What is your favorite song and why?

#### Part B - Classification of Music

1. Tell me about *adoration* music.
2. Tell me about Choir music.
3. Tell me about *luoange* music.
4. Tell me about *cantiques*.

#### Part C - History of Music

1. How long have you prayed at this church?
2. Have you seen changes in music in the church?
  - a. If yes, please describe the changes you have seen.
  - b. If yes, why do you think these changes have occurred?
3. What was music like in Congo before the missionaries came?

#### Part D - Boundaries of Music

1. How does the music you sing in church compare to non-Christian music?
2. How does the music you sing in this church compare to music in other churches, especially the Catholic Church and revivalist churches?
3. Is there anything else you would like to add concerning music and the church?

### II. Questions for Specific Informants

#### Group A - Questions for Choir Directors and Composers

1. Please explain your responsibilities as choir director.
2. What is the most difficult part of your job? What about your job do you enjoy?

3. Do you write your own songs?
  - a. If not, how do you find songs to sing?
  - b. If so, describe the compositional process.
  - c. If so, describe your musical training.

Group B - Questions for Instrumentalists

1. How did you learn to play your instrument?
2. Do you ever play music that is not Christian?

Group C - Elders and Pastors

1. Please aid me in constructing a timeline for musical change in the Church, including specific years and surrounding arguments.

**APPENDIX B**  
**CONSENT FORM AND ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

UNIVERSITY of  
NORTHERN COLORADO



**FORMULAIRE DE CONSENTEMENT POUR LES PARTICIPANTS  
À L'ÉTUDE DES DÉTERMINANTS INDIVIDUELS  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO  
(UNC – Université du Colorado du Nord)**

**Titre du Projet:**

Le Développement de la Musique Mennonite au Congo: Une analyse de la pensée musicale.

**Chercheur principal:** Jill Schroeder-Dorn, Doctorant, Faculté de Musique de l'UNC.

**Téléphone :** 303.880.9462 **Adresse électronique :** [schr4760@bears.unco.edu](mailto:schr4760@bears.unco.edu)

**Maître de thèse:** Galen Darrough, PhD en Musique, Faculté de Musique de l'UNC

**Téléphone :** 970.351.2290 **Adresse électronique :** [galen.darrough@unco.edu](mailto:galen.darrough@unco.edu)

L'objectif de cette analyse est d'étudier le développement de la musique Mennonite au Congo. Les participants peuvent être invités à discuter de l'histoire de la musique dans l'église, leurs styles préférés de musique utilisée dans les services religieux, et l'importance de faire de la musique dans l'église. Les questions seront les suivantes: Quelles sont vos chansons préférées et pourquoi? Pourquoi participez-vous à la musique? Comment votre musique comparer à d'autres styles de musique?

L'entrevue durera environ 45 minutes. Les discussions seront susceptibles d'être enregistrées (audio/vidéo). Ces enregistrements n'appartiendront qu'au chercheur principal et resteront privés. Dans le but de maximiser le caractère confidentiel de cette étude, aucun nom n'apparaîtra dans le rapport final.

Grâce à votre participation à cette étude, vous aurez l'occasion de partager vos pratiques et vos expériences musicales ainsi que vos philosophies avec d'autres musiciens du reste du monde.

Votre participation à cette étude est tout à fait volontaire. Vous êtes libre de vous retirer de l'étude à n'importe quel moment sans aucune pénalité.

Après avoir lu le texte ci-dessus et après avoir pu poser toute question, veuillez signer ci-dessous si vous voulez effectivement participer à cette étude. Vous recevrez une copie de ce formulaire que vous pourrez conserver pour toute référence ultérieure. Pour toute question concernant votre sélection ou votre traitement en tant que participant(e) à l'étude, veuillez contacter le Bureau des Programmes Sponsorisés à Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-2161.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature du Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature du Chercheur

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title:

The Development of Mennonite Music in the Congo: A Study of Musical Thought

Researcher: Jill Schroeder-Dorn, Doctoral Candidate, School of Music

Phone: 303.880.9462 E-mail: [schr4760@bears.unco.edu](mailto:schr4760@bears.unco.edu)

Research Advisor: Galen Darrough, DMA, School of Music

Phone: 970.351.2290 E-mail: [galen.darrough@unco.edu](mailto:galen.darrough@unco.edu)

The purpose of this study is examine the development of Mennonite music in Congo. Participants may be asked to discuss the history of music in the church, their favorite styles of music used in church services, and the importance of making music in the church. Questions will include: What are your favorite songs and why? Why do you participate in music? How does your music compare to other types of music?

The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. The conversations will be audio or video recorded. The recordings will belong to the researcher and will be kept private. To maximize confidentiality, names will not be used in the final paper.

Your participation in this study will contribute to the sharing of your musical practices and philosophies with other musicians around the world.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-2161.

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Subject's signature

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Date

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Researcher's signature

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Date

APPENDIX C  
IRB APPROVAL


UNIVERSITY of  
NORTHERN COLORADO



Institutional Review Board

April 18, 2012

TO: Mark Smith  
School of Sport and Exercise Science

FROM: Maria Lahman, Co-Chair   
UNC Institutional Review Board

RE: Expedited Review of *The Development of Mennonite Music in the Congo: A Study of Musical Thought*, submitted by Jill Schroeder-Dorn (Research Advisor: Galen Darrough)

First Consultant: The above proposal is being submitted to you for an expedited review. Please review the proposal in light of the Committee's charge and direct requests for changes directly to the researcher or researcher's advisor. If you have any unresolved concerns, please contact Maria Lahman, Applied Statistics and Research Methods, Campus Box 124, (x1603). When you are ready to recommend approval, sign this form and return to me.

I recommend approval as is.

  
Signature of First Consultant

5/17/12  
Date

The above referenced prospectus has been reviewed for compliance with HHS guidelines for ethical principles in human subjects research. The decision of the Institutional Review Board is that the project is approved as proposed for a period of one year: 5-22-12 to 5-22-12.

  
Maria Lahman, Co-Chair

5-22-12  
Date

Comments:

- REVIEWED proposal ATTACHED
- EMAILS Addressed access + LOCAL
- ISSUE WITH LANGUAGE PHONE NUMBER  
NOW Addressed.

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